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WESLEY'S VETERANS

LIVES OF
EARLY METHODIST PREACHERS
TOLD BY THEMSELVES

VOL. VII

THOMAS TAYLOR
JAMES ROGERS
MATTHIAS JOYCE
BENJAMIN RHODES

With Additions and Annotations

BY REV. JOHN TELFORD, B.A.

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WESLEY'S VETERANS

Vol. VII.

THOMAS TAYLOR.[1]

I was born November 11, 1738, in the parish of Rothwell, near Leeds, in Yorkshire. I was the youngest of eight children, seven of whom were sons, and the eldest a daughter; so that I was a seventh son. My father was a tanner, and had something considerable to begin the world with; but, proving unfortunate in business, he brought his family into a low condition, especially the younger part; and this fell particularly on me, who was the youngest of all by six years. I have heard much said in praise of my mother; but she died before I was a year old, which, I apprehend, was no small loss to me. I can but just remember my father; so that I was bereaved of both father and mother before I was six years of age. I then fell into the hands of a stepmother for some time, who took care of me as if I had been her own child. I had, rather early, something of a desire and turn for learning. My father and mother

[1] The first part of this autobiography up to 1778 (p. 68) appeared in the *Arminian Magazine* for 1780. In 1785 he published a fuller autobiography, '*Redeeming Grace displayed to the Chief of Sinners*: being the outlines of God's Gracious Dealings with His Unworthy Servant, Thomas Taylor.' (A second edition was published at Leeds in 1804.)

being Presbyterians, I got the Assembly's Catechism off by heart, when I was but four years old, and said it to the minister. I had some visits from the Divine Spirit very early; but having no one to encourage me, the impressions wore off. My natural temper was active, wild, and very mischievous; and I was so known an offender in little wild pranks, that I have often suffered though not guilty: for when the real delinquent could not be found out, the saddle was laid upon my back. Being of a turbulent, daring cast, I often, when very little, ran into great dangers, by climbing up into high trees, and doing many other things of a like kind. When I was between five and six years of age, as I was walking by the river Calder, and trying how near the edge I could go, the ground gave way, and I fell in where it was very deep. My father and some other men were at a little distance, and heard my cries as I fell in. They ran to me, and soon got me out, and found I was not much worse. I often rambled away, even at that age, so that nobody knew where I was; and being frequently pinched with hunger, I sometimes stole fruit. Indeed I often rambled so far that I knew not where I was; and sometimes, having played some unlucky frolic, I was afraid to return home. One day, being in my wandering humour, I got to a great farmhouse, and being sauntering about, a large fierce bull-dog ran at me, seized me, and got me down, but only tore my clothes: how I was delivered I know not, for I do not remember that any one was near.

Being seven years of age, I contracted the

abominable habit of cursing and swearing, which never left me till I was brought to know myself. Being of a passionate temper (oh, could I write this in tears of blood!) I frequently swore in a most dreadful manner; nor did I stick at lying. Yet, young as I was, I was not without checks from God; and had I been under the care of any that knew how to manage me, this might have prevented many years of horrid impiety.

When I was between nine and ten years of age my eldest brother took me to his house, designing that I should be brought up to his business, namely, a clothier. Nothing could have been more detestable to me. I abhorred the name of a clothier; yea, I heartily despised both him and his trade. Hence I was not very studious to please him; and this brought what I thought hard usage upon me; so that after some time I determined to decamp. But the question was, whither should I go? This I knew not; for though I had several relations in good circumstances, yet I knew I should meet with a cold reception from them when they knew that I had run away from my brother. Nevertheless, being determined not to stay, my resolution was to go somewhere.

One morning, having done something amiss, rather by accident than design, I expected to meet with correction; and, to avoid it, set out, fasting, about the middle of November. It was a hard frost, and I was in a poor habit, having on the worst clothes I had. I wandered all that day, not knowing, nor indeed much caring, what would

become of me. I was very hungry, and sorely pinched with cold. I picked the hips from the hedge, and about eight o'clock at night came to another brother's house, eight or nine miles from the place where I set out in the morning. When I came there, though I was cold and hungry, I durst not for some time go in, as I was not in the dress of a visitor. However, at last I ventured in, and my reception was far more agreeable than I expected: the next day I was treated civilly, so I began to hope that I was to stay there, which I greatly desired. But, alas! on the third day I was escorted back to my former quarters, though much against my inclination. Nevertheless, I determined to make my escape again the first opportunity; which in a fortnight after I effected.

I remembered my nurse used to show great fondness for me: I therefore set out, and marched to her, about nine or ten miles off, in the same garb in which I had fled before. Though I was received tolerably well, yet my dress showed me to be a runaway; so that the family were at a loss how to treat me. This was not far from that brother's house where I fled before, to whom I now paid another visit; but here I was treated roughly, and in a few days was, by main force, conducted back to the place from whence I came. Yet I was determined not to stay there. But I thought I should succeed better if I could decamp in a better dress; and therefore considered how to get some of my better clothes. I got a quantity of them together, and resolved to march by night,

seeing there was no probability of doing it by day. This was a somewhat daring attempt for a boy of ten years old. But the clothes were found before night, and the cause suspected, for which I underwent a severe beating. This was one of the worst methods that could have been taken; for it only confirmed my resolution not to stay. I then thought the likeliest way to effect my escape would be to go on a Sunday, when trimmed in my best fashion. This I therefore resolved upon, and accordingly I put on two shirts that I might have a change; but unfortunately it was discovered as soon as I came downstairs, so that I was ordered to strip, and underwent again a severe discipline.

I was now rather a close prisoner, and especially on Sundays. However, one Sunday, being equipped in my best, I waited all day for the opportunity, but could not get my hat. Finding that to be the case, I set out bareheaded, and ran for life; determining that night to go to my old nurse, and then to ramble where I should not be known. I got thither, and was vastly pleased with myself, thinking now I should gain my utmost desire; but while I sat by the fire, who should come riding to the door but my brother, who had taken horse and pursued me; and though it was now night, yet some people had taken notice while it was daylight of a strange boy going in great haste without a hat. By this means he easily guessed where I was gone. Back again I was brought; but with as fixed a resolution as ever that I would not stay. Being now

almost a close prisoner, I was kept in a mean habit; but that was nothing to me. A day or two after Christmas day I made my final escape. And now I entered upon a scene of distress indeed! What I endured from hunger and cold, no one knows but myself. My case was singular; I had relations living in affluence, on the right hand and on the left, while I should have been glad of the fragments which their servants, yea, perhaps their dogs, despised. That winter was particularly severe, and it was just in the depth of it. My friends thought to starve me back again to my eldest brother; but I had an unconquerable aversion both to him and his trade. I would just remark here, the impropriety of fixing boys in any business which is so much against their inclinations. It seldom fares better with them than with me, and sometimes proves their ruin.

Finding that nothing could make me submit to return to my eldest brother, the other, to whose house I first fled, took me, and after some time put me to a business that I less disliked, though not quite to my mind. Indeed, my mind inclined more to learning; but as I could not have my wish, I was willing to comply.

As I grew up, my habits of sin multiplied, and my mouth was fraught with oaths, lies, and deceit. I loved sinful recreations and foolish pastimes to an excess, and soon became a dexterous gambler, especially at cards. Having much pride and little money, I was the more intent upon furnishing myself in that way. I wished to associate with those whose circumstances were better than my

own, and strove to equal them in dress and everything else. During this time the Spirit of God strove with me, and sometimes good resolutions took place for a season; but no sooner did a horse-race or party of pleasure offer itself, than my resolutions died away, and I was worse than ever. Yet I read the Bible, and got much light into many things. I knew that I had not faith; and when at church (for I went to church sometimes), I durst not repeat the Creed: for I knew I was no believer; and though I could lie at other times, I would not lie there. I likewise knew that I was not born again; but what the new birth was, I knew not, nor had I any to tell me. I knew that I was far from being what I ought to be; but I thought I would be better when I was a little older.

When I was about seventeen I heard that eminent servant of God, Mr. Whitefield. The first sight of his countenance struck me. There was an immense multitude, and his voice was like a trumpet. His text was Rom. xiii. 11: 'It is high time to awake out of sleep.' The whole of the discourse was attended with an amazing power, I believe, to many. I am sure it was to me. When he addressed himself to people of several ages in the large congregation before him, and among the rest, to the young people, that took great hold of me. I did not observe anything extraordinary in what he said, as to his matter; but there was such an unction in his words as I had never felt before. I went home full of good resolutions now to break off all my bad practices.

But, alas! this also proved as a morning cloud. I was surrounded by such as were utterly abandoned; so I soon returned with the dog to his vomit. Nay, I was worse than ever; till happening to read the *Pilgrim's Progress*, I had another powerful visit from the Lord. But that also remained only a short time; for my passions hurried me on with surprising impetuosity.

I now left off attending any place of worship, and gave full scope to every wretched disposition. I had a brother living at some distance, who had been awakened some time. But I had long taken my leave of him, as his conversation did not at all suit my inclination. I used to wrangle with him as well as I could, yet this generally left a good impression upon my mind. But now I never came near him, being wholly taken up with things of another kind. In the midst of my career I was very miserable; and when I was among my jovial companions, and saw every one around me all joy and gladness, I was often exceedingly melancholy and dejected, though I assumed an air of cheerfulness. And often have I lain down in great terror, thinking, 'Perhaps I may awake in hell!' A whim now came into my head to go into the army. And a party of horse being at this time recruiting in Wakefield, and an acquaintance of mine entering himself a volunteer, I needed but little solicitation to follow his steps. I therefore went to the officer, and, being young and pretty well made, was very acceptable. But, upon trial, I was about half an inch beneath the standard, and therefore he could not take me.

This gave a check to my career in some measure; but I soon returned to my former conduct, abandoned to everything that my age and circumstances could admit of. I cannot say that drinking had much influence over me; yet I have been intoxicated several times: and once, not long before I was awakened, and coming home in the night with others, we had a ferry to cross; while the boat was coming, being bereaved of my senses, I stumbled, and had it not just then come to shore, I should have fallen into the water, and in all likelihood have been lost eternally. I took my leave of getting drunk, and do not remember that this sin ever took me captive again. Nevertheless, in other respects I was as bad as ever—nay, even worse; for, as I was now grown up, my habits of sin were stronger and more numerous.

As I had ceased to go to any place of worship, I had in a good measure dropped my reading too. Still my conscience was not quite asleep: I had very uneasy moments. But I ran into wild company and diversions as soon as I could; and it was a mercy that I had not more money, for that would have added fuel to the fire; and though nothing is impossible with God, yet, in all human probability, I should never have been saved. Thus lay my poor soul in ruins, when, in the beginning of the year 1758, the Lord, by a kind chain of providence, was pleased to arrest me in my full career of sin.

There was a young man with whom I had been a companion for several years: he had been in a

fever, and during his illness was awakened, and had contracted an acquaintance with the Independents. He persuaded me one Sunday to go and hear their minister, whom he was accustomed to hear: to oblige him I went. The text was, 'They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick.' While the preacher was describing the maladies of a sick soul, several drunken men came in, and were very rude. Partly with what the minister said, and partly by being struck with their behaviour, I never felt myself so affected in all my life. I plainly saw there must be a change, or I was undone for ever. Yet I cannot say that I was in such terror as might have been expected from so stubborn a sinner. The usual temptation awaited me when I came home; nor did I wholly escape free. But my desires and convictions continued all that week, and on Sunday I went to the same place of worship again; and I now plainly saw that I must give up my companions, or I could not be saved. But here was a difficulty: though very young, I had contracted an acquaintance with a young person who was as thoughtless as myself. Being brought up in the same neighbourhood, a fondness had insensibly stolen upon us both. Yet as I was determined to save my soul, and as she had a perfect antipathy to everything of the kind, it was not long before I got disentangled: so that snare was also broken.

I now began to cry to God in private, but was sorely tempted the first time I went to my knees. I was afraid, either that I should drop down dead,

or that the devil would appear to me, if not take me away. I frequently thought that Satan was behind me when I was praying, and was afraid to open my eyes lest I should see him. Indeed it is an exercise which the devil does not love, and which he will use every means to prevent. I began now to contract an acquaintance with the people of the meeting, and was much noticed by them. Several of them had been joined with the Methodists, and gave such an account of them that I had no desire of being acquainted with them. One Methodist lived near me, and had a public meeting at his house every Sunday evening, to which I sometimes went. He was useful to me, and might have been more so; but being more attached to the other people, I kept company with them only. Alleine's *Alarm* now fell into my hands. It described my case as exactly as if it had been written on purpose; so that I prized it above rubies. I had gracious visits from the Lord, exceedingly sweet to my soul; but no one said, 'Now believe, and thou shalt be saved'; so that I was like Samuel, I knew not the voice of the Lord. I began now to meet with a good deal of opposition: my acquaintances laughed me to scorn; though whenever they came near me, the Lord opened my mouth in such a manner that I could easily put them to silence. My master (for I was not yet out of my apprenticeship) was sour, and much out of humour at times. He, and others whom I was in some measure under, had no objection to a reformation in me; but now they supposed I was as mad one way

as I had been the other. I continued to press forward, and the Lord continued to visit me with tastes of His love, which were exceedingly precious to me. The time of Wakefield races drew on: many expected that my religion would then be at an end, as they knew how passionately fond I was of those vanities; and indeed I was not without fear myself—not that I found the least inclination to anything of the kind, yet I knew not how it might be when the time came. But God took care of that: that fear was of His planting, and was a means of driving me nearer to Himself.

One Lord's-day evening I retired to my apartment for my usual exercise of reading and prayer. While I was calling upon the Lord, He appeared in a wonderful manner, as with His vesture dipped in blood. I saw Him by the eye of faith, hanging on the cross; and the sight caused such love to flow into my soul that I believed that moment, and never since gave up my confidence. I had not then any particular promise applied; but was enabled to cast my soul upon that atoning sacrifice which I saw was made for my offences. I had nothing to trust in but the blood of sprinkling which speaketh better things than that of Abel. But,

O the rapturous height
Of that holy delight,
Which I found in the life-giving blood;
Of my Saviour possessed,
I was perfectly blessed,
As if filled with the fullness of God.

As I had no one near to tell them what God had done for my soul, I was in a short time brought into doubts; but yet I could not give up my confidence. Some time after, the two following scriptures came to me with remarkable power: 'I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly' (John x. 10); and, 'Blessed and holy is he who hath part in the first resurrection; on such the second death shall have no power' (Rev. xx. 6). These two testimonies were indeed words in season, and very precious to my soul. I had some difficulties soon after to grapple with, and at times was brought very low; but still His grace was sufficient. I often thought if I was to live at Leeds, where there were such plenty of religious means, it would be almost as the gate of heaven to me; and in particular I expected great assistance from the fellowship of those who were strong in grace. But God would have me dependent on Himself alone; for though I went to Leeds, as I was of a shy disposition, I had no fellowship with any one. I was then tempted to think that there was not much life there; at least, I found very little. It was a very dull time with me; yet I kept close to God in prayer, and He kept my soul in a measure of peace.

From thence I removed to another place, where there were few that pretended to religion. I feared lest now I should be overthrown; but I found here two or three Methodists, who had preaching sometimes. I soon got among them, and often found it a blessing to my soul:

particularly once in hearing that plain, honest man, Paul Greenwood, whose word left a lasting impression on my mind. But though I met with them at times, yet there was a discord in our manner of speaking which prevented my close union. From thence I removed to Wakefield, where my first religious acquaintance lived, and with whom I had the greatest union. I kept on in much simplicity, watching unto prayer, and still found reading very profitable; as indeed it was from my first setting out in the ways of God.

But now a new scene opened: I began to think that I was called to preach. This had in a measure been pressed upon my mind for some time; but whether it was a delusion from Satan, or a call from the Spirit of God, I knew not. I dreaded the thoughts of running before I was sent.

I likewise thought that a preacher should have learning, which had been much neglected in me. Yet the impression grew stronger and stronger. I wanted to recommend my Lord to ruined sinners, and thought I could rejoice if I was torn in pieces for so doing. I had neither ease, nor honour, nor profit in view; but wanted to be an instrument in God's hands of saving souls. The word of the Lord was as a fire shut up in my bones. At the same time I was so conscious of my inability for the work, that I was ashamed to intimate my thoughts to any one. Oh, how have I agonized with God not to suffer me to engage in such a work unless it was His will; and if it was, to point out my way! That awful

declaration, Rev. xxii. 18, 19, stood seemingly in my way: 'For I testify to every one that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book; and if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.' It is probable I might understand these words in too general a sense; but they seemed as if they pointed out a very narrow path for a gospel minister to go in, and made me cry out, 'Who is sufficient for these things?'

But God answered for Himself from the first of Jeremiah: 'Then the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations. Then said I, Ah, Lord God! behold, I cannot speak: for I am a child.' (My very objection!) 'But the Lord said unto me, Say not, I am a child: for thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak. Be not afraid of their faces: for I am with thee to deliver thee, saith the Lord. Then the Lord put forth His hand, and touched my mouth. And the Lord said unto me, Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth.' Now, if any passage was ever applied to any one by the Spirit of God, surely this was to me. Therefore, I determined to make

the attempt; but still I knew not how to set about it, for I was ashamed to declare my mind to any one, from a sense of my absolute unfitness for the work. I had never spoken a word in the way of exhortation, but had frequently prayed in public. At length one or two of my acquaintance asked me if I did not think I was called to preach. With much confusion, I answered in the affirmative.

From that time I determined to make an attempt; but the question was, where? At last I resolved to begin on a Sunday evening, and pitched upon a very profane place to make my first effort; thinking an ignorant place was the fittest for an ignorant preacher. When I came within sight of the village, my spirit was ready to sink within me; not for fear of persecution, though the place was rude enough, but from a sense of the importance of the undertaking. When I came to the place, the heart of the honest man who had invited me failed him; therefore I found his house was shut up. This rather damped me; but another door being immediately set open, I went in. A houseful of people gathered: I stood up, sung a hymn and prayed, but did not give out a text; for as I had never before opened my mouth to exhort in public, I did not know whether I could say anything or not. But I found assistance in giving a word of exhortation, and I believe it was accompanied with the power of God to many present. I appointed to go again the next Sunday; and then chose Matt. v. 3 for a text, and found life and liberty in speaking, and a blessing attended it.

The tidings of my preaching soon reached the congregation where I was a hearer; and happening to have no preacher the following Lord's day, they requested that I would supply the place of one. This was a hard task, for there were several before whom I was much afraid to stand up; however, I durst not decline the offer. I spoke from John i. 29. Here again my mouth was opened, and my tongue was loosed, so that they objected nothing: undoubtedly they made allowance for a young speaker. Being now in some measure satisfied that I ought to speak in God's name, I embraced many opportunities of going to several places.

I now wanted to improve my little learning; and, having a trifle of money, I entirely devoted myself to that purpose, not knowing nor caring how I might be disposed of, only I wanted to be useful.

After some time, being destitute of a minister at the place where I was a hearer, they desired I would accept the place: accordingly, I undertook to preach to them awhile, till we should see a little farther. The congregation was but small: however, I had the satisfaction to see it increase, and some sinners were convinced. But some of the leading men, having frequently veered about from one system to another, seemed now mightily charmed with Antinomianism. Dr. Crisp and Mr. Saltmarsh's works were highly approved of, and some of Dr. Gill's writings. But a Mr. Relly was the great apostle among them,[1] on account

[1] James Relly. See Tyerman's *Wesley*, vol. ii. p. 400.

of his famous Hymn-book, and his treatise *Of the Union of Christ and His Church.* He came into the country a few weeks; and by him I was much blinded, and for a time all seemed right which he advanced. But in one particular sermon he explained his sentiments freely, when I was fully satisfied that he had sadly perverted the truth. I went to him the next day, and ventured to object against what he had advanced the preceding night. He was not prepared to answer some things which I had objected, but attempted to puzzle me by starting other questions. I gained but little satisfaction from this interview: but still I was rather tinctured with Antinomianism; yet I laboured to live near to God. I earnestly begged to be entirely right, both in principle and practice.

A particular providence now occasioned my coming among the Methodists. I went one time to hear Mr. Whitefield; and Mr. Hanby, who was with him, I was informed, was to preach the next Lord's day. I determined to hear him, as the time did not interfere with our time of worship. When I went, I was amazingly struck to find him in a far more evangelical strain than I expected. I had now and then gone to hear the Methodists before, but was generally disgusted. But the present sermon had quite a different effect. I was now more reconciled to the Methodists than I had been, and began to be acquainted with the people. Reprobation was what I never could digest; and I was not without my doubts concerning final perseverance, but could not endure

to hear it spoken against. But I was most rooted in the doctrine of the imputed righteousness of Christ, taking it for granted that it was true, because Mr. Hervey had written in its defence.

About this time, being invited to preach in the Methodist preaching-house, I accepted the invitation. This gave great offence to my own people, several of whom were run-away Methodists. Meantime I began to think of joining the Methodists, which my congregation suspected: the heads of them met me, and made me some offers of a temporal kind. But I told them I thought Providence called me to an itinerant life, and I wished them to look out for one who might suit them. As I knew few of them would go with me, I recommended Mr. Ingham to them, who had formed an itinerancy, and wrote to Mr. Ingham myself on their behalf. He came, and several of the preachers in his Connexion; but as Mr. Ingham's people soon after broke in pieces, the meeting relapsed into its former state of Independency. Being now disengaged, I preached up and down among the Methodists. But being in principle partly a Calvinist, and having been accustomed to read Calvinian books, their phrases were become very familiar to me. However, I aimed at doing good; and when any of the preachers were sick, or had anywhere to go, I readily supplied their place; and I have reason to believe my labour was not in vain.

The summer being arrived, and Mr. Wesley coming into the country, I met him at Birstall.[1]

[1] Wesley preached at Birstall on July 17, 1761.

He received me with that affability and condescension for which he was so remarkable. I heard him preach in several places; but I cannot say that I could cordially receive the doctrine of perfection. As the Conference was drawing near, he advised me to attend it at London. I intimated a desire of spending a year in that place, that I might be fully informed both in the doctrines and discipline of the Methodists. Accordingly, I disposed of some small effects which I had, and set out on foot. When I came thither I expected to undergo a close examination, with regard to my principles, experience, and abilities; and therefore, as I did not in everything agree with Mr. Wesley, it was a doubt with me whether I should not be rejected. But, to my surprise, I was not asked one question relative to any of these things; but was appointed for Wales, and was the only travelling preacher of our Connexion in those parts. This I have sometimes thought was not prudently done, as I was but just come into the Connexion. However, I set out for Bristol, and so into Wales; and truly a rough region it was. A preacher at Bristol said to me, 'You seem pretty well dressed, and will hold out well enough for a year; but you must expect nothing to buy any more clothes with when those are worn out.' However, I did not regard that; for I was determined to spend and be spent in doing all the good I could. I therefore began preaching out of doors in the first town I came to, which was Chepstow, and determined to do so in every town I came to. Thus I went

on till after Christmas, and endured a good deal of hardship from hunger and cold; especially in passing those dreadful mountains from Neath to Brecon, which were nearly forty miles over, and have a most dismal aspect in winter. On these I travelled a long way, and saw neither house nor field, hedge nor tree; nor yet any living creature, excepting here and there a poor sheep or two, nor scarcely any visible track to know my way by. This was not pleasing to flesh and blood; but still I determined to go on.

In February there seemed a prospect of much good in a large tract of land called Gower, in Glamorganshire: the inhabitants of it were nearly heathens. I went down into this miserable country in very cold, rainy weather: the people flocked to hear, but we were ill provided with convenient places to preach in. Meantime the rain was excessive, and the cold intense, while we had but little fire; so that I put on my wet clothes several days successively, yet without any inconvenience afterwards. Here God blessed my word; I collected several societies, and many were at this time brought to experience the knowledge of salvation by the remission of sins.

Towards summer, a circumstance seemed to open my way sixty or seventy miles farther down to Pembrokeshire; I went thither, and preached at Carmarthen in my way. Afterwards I preached at Pembroke, and had multitudes to hear, who behaved in a respectful manner, and generously paid all my expenses; for at this time there was no provision made for missionaries.

I preached in several places round Milford Haven, and had many to hear. Indeed, the prospect was so promising, and the people were so loving, that I was almost tempted to embrace their pressing invitations to stay with them. But I thought that would be a betrayal of my trust; so I returned to my own circuit, promising that I would return again after the Conference was over. When I returned into the old circuit, I was seized with a slow fever. I believe it was in some measure occasioned by fatigues. But Providence was kind to me: for though I was in a poor place, where little assistance was to be had; yet, by the blessing of God, I did without it. Mr. Mather then came from Staffordshire, to help me to put things into some order, and went with me through the rambling circuit; and indeed his advice has been of use to me ever since.

I attended the Conference at Leeds, in August, 1762, and was sent back into Pembrokeshire. But though I had three hundred miles to ride, and a new work to begin, I had nothing allowed me either to take me thither or support me when I got there. But of this I took no care; and, through a kind Providence, I wanted nothing. Another preacher being sent into the old circuit, I had my full scope in the new one. Things turned out beyond my expectation. The Lord blessed the word. I several times visited the societies in Gower which I joined the year before; for the other preacher had not time. I endured a good deal of hardship and danger in passing and repassing from Gower to Pembrokeshire in winter;

there being several dangerous waters to cross. Sometimes a stranger is surrounded by the tides, whilst he is crossing the sands, and knows nothing of the matter till he finds himself hemmed in on every side. This I once narrowly escaped. I had once a long day's journey, when, coming to one of the ferries, which is a mile over, I found the boat was broken. I had nine miles to ride up to Carmarthen, where the bridge was, and nine miles on the other side back again; this added eighteen miles to my journey. I just got over the last ferry in the evening; but which was my road I knew not, and the people could not or would not speak English. But they pointed me up a dark lane, which at length brought me to a wild mountain. It being quite dark, I knew not which way to go; for there was no road. At length my mare sunk down in a bog, and stuck fast. Here I was at a loss what to do; for if I left her, it was ten to one if I should find her again. As I knew not which way to go for help, I shouted till I was weary; but to no purpose. I pitied the poor creature, that after so long and fatiguing a journey had such a stable at night.

After some time I took hold of the bridle, and pulled her head; being strong, she made a vigorous struggle, and got her foreparts above ground, and, after taking breath, made another stout spring, and got entirely free. At this I was not a little glad; but, not knowing the ground, I judged it safest to lead her after me. I was weary, cold, and hungry; and where or when my

journey should end, I knew not. At length I discovered something like a house, at which I was exceedingly glad: but my joy was soon over; for, making up to it, I found it an old ruin uninhabited; so my poor weary companion and I set out again.

At last I saw a man, and prevailed upon him, for sixpence, to show me the way from the common, which was not a quarter of a mile; for it happened that I had come the direct road. But when I came to the place I aimed at, some time in the night, there was nothing to eat for either man or horse. I got the poor beast to a farm-house at some distance. My lodging was but indifferent, yet very agreeable, as I was weary; and I know not that either I or my beast ailed anything after we had got into good quarters.

The Lord prospered my undertaking in Pembrokeshire; so that by Christmas I had eight or nine societies; and, as the people were remarkably loving, my time went on comfortably. It is true I often met with things that were not agreeable; for I was continually ranging about to beat up fresh ground, and Wales is not the most pleasing part of the world for a stranger to wander in, especially on the errand which I was upon. But I cared very little about the matter, provided I could see some fruit of my labour. I could rest upon straw when needful, and be well content.

A little before the Conference, I went to Tenby, where the people had held out stoutly for their master, and boasted that no preachers had ever come there, neither should they, but at the price

of their lives. I was determined to make the attempt. So a few friends accompanied me, one Sunday morning, from Pembroke. We arrived there by eight o'clock, and, after putting up our horses, went to the Cross. I gave out the Hundredth Psalm. The people flocked together amain, and all behaved very well. But they presented a strange figure; some looking through their windows, naked as they had jumped out of bed; some running to the Cross with part of their clothes on. After singing and praying without interruption, I gave out my text, and all was quite still. By and by I observed a person with an air of importance walking up and down, who, I soon learned, was the mayor. He would fain have got some of the crowd to pull me down; but all the people stood staring with their mouths and eyes open, as if they would have devoured every word. Finding the town's people took no notice of him, he addressed a couple of sailors who stood by themselves; desiring that they would take that fellow down. But the honest tars answered in their own style, 'The devil shall take him down for us.' He then fetched out the Riot Act, and came into the midst of the crowd to read it: so I ceased speaking until he had concluded. I asked if he had done reading. He said he had. 'Well, then,' said I, 'I will begin again'; so I went on, and concluded in peace. After sermon the constables came to fetch me before the mayor. When I came thither, I found the rector, the curate, and the town-clerk there. Mr. Mayor insisted that I had been making a

riot. I denied the charge, and desired him to prove it. He said, he would not stand proving the matter with me; but, says he, 'Show your authority, or to prison you shall go.' I told him, 'I have been preaching, and have a licence so to do'; which I then produced. This being read, 'These justices,'[1] said he, 'are Methodists, every one of them. Well, but is this all you have to show?' I answered, 'Yes.' 'Then,' said he, 'you must go to prison. Let his mittimus be made out.' For which purpose, pen, ink, and paper were brought. But he was informed there was an Act of Toleration. This was produced; in which it was asserted that a qualified preacher might preach in either house, field, or other place. This seemed to puzzle Mr. Mayor a little; and he thought it best to dismiss me, on condition that nothing of the kind might be attempted again. I told him I intended to preach again at two o'clock; which I did to wellnigh all the town, and had no interruption. I went again that day fortnight, and preached three times, and had very large congregations each time. Presently after I left the country, and must confess I cannot help blaming those who came after me for not following the blow. I was much importuned to stay in the country. However, I tore myself from them, and hastened to the London Conference [1763].

From thence I was appointed for Castlebar, in Ireland, and made the best of my way thither. As I sailed up the Bristol Channel, I looked with a wistful eye to Pembrokeshire; and if I could

[1] The justices who signed the licence.

have got on shore, I should have been tempted to stay with the people. But we stretched over for Dublin, where I stayed near a fortnight, and preached with some degree of satisfaction, especially in the Royal Square, belonging to the barracks, where many of the soldiers attended and behaved remarkably well, as they do in every place in Ireland. As we seldom preach in country places in Ireland, the people being generally Papists, and often strangers to English, except in the north; so in towns there are always soldiers quartered, and generally some in our society. From Dublin I set out for Castlebar, quite on the other side of the kingdom, preaching at Drumcree, Athlone, Aughrim, and Holy Mount by the way, and found the people very hospitable and loving, as they are indeed all over Ireland wherever I have been; so that if in everything the Irish excelled as they do in freedom and hospitality, we might give it its ancient name, 'a nation of saints.' Being arrived at Castlebar, my principal place, I found myself not only in another country, but amongst another sort of people. Instead of having crowds following me, as in Pembrokeshire, I was shut up in a little dark corner, and had but three small congregations in the circuit: and being entirely surrounded by Papists, there was no probability of enlarging my sphere of action; for they neither understood English, nor durst they come to hear if they had been ever so desirous. Here I was warmer than wise, in my zeal against the Papists; and had it not been for three troops of dragoons who lay

in the town, and were constant hearers, I know not but I should have paid for my rashness. It is certainly beginning at the wrong end with the generality of Roman Catholics to attack their principles, as this raises prejudice in them immediately, and then all reasoning is at an end. If we mean to do them good, it must be by lovingly introducing the experimental and practical parts of religion. I once preached out of doors, at a place called Drummersnave, at the time of a Papist visitation, and a large concourse of people: here I imprudently entered into the controversies of priestly absolution, purgatory, transubstantiation, praying to saints, &c. This was ill-timed, and only stirred up rage and indignation. Some of my friends were alarmed, expecting that some mischief would ensue, either openly or secretly; and I was not without apprehension; but I received no harm, and learned to be wiser, for I see we must not provoke those whom we intend to profit.

Finding I could not enlarge my bounds of preaching, I determined to improve my little learning. I did not like to be at the mercy of every pretender with regard to the original Scriptures, and was much excited to aim at a little more knowledge by reading Mr. Wesley's 'Address to the Clergy.'[1] I saw every reason assigned for their knowing Greek and Hebrew was doubly applicable to me. Indeed it was my desire from the time of my first engaging in the work of God to show myself approved unto God,

[1] See Wesley's *Works*, vol. x., p. 480.

a workman that needeth not be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

Very providentially, there was a grammar-school in Castlebar, in which some gentlemen's sons were instructed in the learned languages. The master very freely assisted me; so that I preached night and morning, devoted the forenoon to study, and spent the afternoon in visiting the sick, and reading English; and the evening I spent with my friendly schoolmaster. This has proved very useful to me ever since. Some good was done during my stay here: the numbers in the societies were a little increased, and the congregations much enlarged.

From hence I removed into the Athlone Circuit. I still attended to my studies, but had not the same opportunities as before. I here got a sore illness by lying in a damp bed,[1] so that my speech and hearing were wellnigh taken from me. But this was a necessary visitation, and what my carelessness deserved. However, when I was able, I preached abroad in most of the towns, and I hope not in vain; though I did not live so near to God as I ought to have done.

My next remove was to Cork. Here a blessed work was begun under that indefatigable servant of God, Mr. Penington. It did not decrease during my stay, but increased more abundantly. I preached abroad in every part of the city. Prayer-meetings were regularly kept up. I met the class-leaders every Saturday night, and

[1] 'This, I believe, has been the death of several of the preachers; and yet some of the people are not careful in this point.'—*Taylor.*

appointed each his work for the ensuing week. Strict discipline was observed. Not a class-leader or steward was permitted to enter the society-meeting without producing his ticket; and the work of the Lord prospered on every side. In this agreeable manner things went on, when Mr. James Morgan came to help me. He was the older preacher, though the care of things was, in some measure, committed to me. I could soon see a party gathering against me, who did not like that strictness of discipline. At length he insisted on a person being admitted to the lovefeasts and society-meetings who would not meet in class. To this I could not consent. I insisted on poor and rich meeting in class, or not to have any privilege of meeting in society. Letters were sent to Mr. Wesley, and his answers were construed in their favour. However, I stood to what I saw was right. They then alleged her husband would not let her meet in class. To cut off this pretence, I went and asked him if he did hinder her. His answer was, 'She is at her own liberty.' Then Mr. Morgan was obliged to submit. This, however, caused a shyness betwixt him and me, which cast a damp upon the work. Yet I kept up, at all events, the same discipline as long as I stayed at Cork.[1]

At the beginning of the year 1765 I removed to Limerick, where I found matters in a very different state from what I found them in Cork.

[1] Wesley refers to the work done by Taylor and Penington: 'They were zealous men, and sound preachers; full of activity, and strict in discipline, without respect of persons, &c.'—*Journal*, May 26, 1767.

The people were very languid and lifeless, and my own spirit was rather irritated; so that I did not see much fruit, except at a place called Killfinnane. In July I came over to England, to the Manchester Conference. After seeing some of my relations in Yorkshire, I set out for Scotland, preaching at Keighley, Blackburn, Kendal, and Cockermouth, and so on to Dumfries, the first town of note in Scotland. Resting on the Sunday at Dumfries, I preached in the ballroom, the day being rainy, so that I could not preach out of doors. Here I was much importuned to stay; but my destination was to Glasgow. When I arrived, I entered on a scene which I had never witnessed before. The winter was at hand; I was in a strange land; there was no society, no place of entertainment, no place to preach in, no friend to communicate my mind to. I took a private lodging, and gave out that I should preach on the Green, a place of public resort, hard by the city. A table was carried to the place, and at the appointed time I went, and found two bakers' boys and two old women waiting. My very soul sunk within me. I had travelled by land and by water near six hundred miles to this place; and behold my congregation! I turned upon my heel to go away. No one can tell but they who have experienced it, what a task it is to stand in the open air to preach to nobody! more especially in such a place as Glasgow. However, at length I mounted my table, and began the singing, which I had entirely to myself. A few more kept creeping together,

all seemingly very poor people, till at length I had about two hundred hearers. But this was poor encouragement. The night following I had a more promising congregation; yet nothing to what I expected. The third night we had heavy rain. This quite cast me down again. Oh, what a day of distress was that! I had not learned in all states to be content. The enemy assaulted me sorely, so that I was ready to cry out, 'It is better for me to die than to live.' But God pitied my weakness: the next day cleared up, and I was never prevented from preaching out of doors for eleven or twelve weeks after.

On the Saturday evening I had a large congregation, and on Sunday morning a larger; but such a one on Sunday evening as I do not remember ever seeing before, excepting one. I mounted my table, but was quite too low still. I set a chair upon it, but was quite too low still. I then mounted upon a high wall, and cried aloud, 'The hour is coming and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live.' All was still as night, so that I conceived great hopes of this opportunity. But when I had done they made a lane for me to walk through the huge multitude, while they stood staring at me, but no one said, 'Where dwellest thou?' I walked home much dejected.

One great obstacle in my way was, a new edition of the *Eleven Letters* ascribed to Mr. Hervey had just come out, prefaced by a minister in

Edinburgh,[1] a man much esteemed in Scotland. These Letters fully answered their design. They carried gall and wormwood wherever they came. So that it was a sufficient reason for every one to keep his distance, because I was connected with Mr. Wesley. I laboured to keep as clear as possible of controversy, dwelling chiefly upon repentance, faith, and the new birth. Indeed, as I then leaned much both to the doctrine of the imputed righteousness of Christ, and final perseverance, I had no temptation to bring in controversy.

I soon found that persons may easily learn to con over several Gospel topics—such as original sin, the offices of Christ, His being the only Saviour, and the like—and yet be haughty, self-sufficient, unbroken-hearted sinners. This I saw, and levelled all my powers against it. I soon found their pharisaic hearts could not brook it. Hence I drew their resentment upon me, and plenty of lies and calumnies were soon spread abroad.

I continued preaching night and morning, when opportunity offered; and tried much to procure a place to preach in, as the winter was now come on. I believe I was disappointed in ten or twelve different places. I sold my horse; and a preacher who passed through Glasgow to Ireland, having his horse lamed, and little money left, I spared about three guineas to help him on his way. This brought my stock into a small compass; and having everything to pay for, I was reduced

[1] Dr. John Erskine. See vol. ii. of this series, p. 67.

to a short allowance. I paid three shillings per week for my room, fire, and attendance; but I really kept a very poor house. I confess that I never kept so many fast days, either before or since. But how to keep up my credit was a difficulty; for I was afraid my landlady would think me either poor or covetous. I frequently desired her not to provide anything for dinner; and a little before noon, I dressed myself, and walked out, till after dinner, and then came home to my hungry room with a hungry belly. However, she thought I had dined out somewhere; so I saved my credit.

About this time a poor man was executed for the murder of his wife. I attended him several weeks in the prison, and likewise at his execution, which had a circumstance I never saw before: they chopped off his right hand, before his execution, with a great axe, just as a butcher would chop a piece of beef with a cleaver. It is the law of Scotland for every murderer to have his right hand struck off before his execution, and to be stuck upon the pole where he is gibbeted. As I had reason to believe that the Lord had plucked him as a brand from the burning, I published a short account of his case. It is amazing what a cry this raised up against me, to say that God had mercy on such a sinner! Scurrilous papers were cried up and down the streets against me, filled with lies of all sorts. Nay, so zealous was some poor creature that he began publishing weekly numbers, and had no better subject than myself. My case was now deplorable: I had

famine within doors, and plenty of reproach without. And yet I might have prevented it all; for just at this time there was an elegant place of worship building, called a kirk of relief. Formerly the inhabitants of Scotland had the privilege of choosing their own ministers: of this privilege they are now debarred, and the gift of a living lies in the hands of a patron. But frequently the parishioners unite, build a place of worship, which they term a kirk of relief, and call a minister themselves; leaving the old kirk to the patron and his friend. This was the case in Glasgow: the church was built, but they had not chosen their minister. One of their leading men was one of my greatest intimates. He said he would engage me three hundred votes, which would be a majority. This was an alluring bait, considering my present circumstances; a place of one hundred and forty pounds per annum, with honour and credit, on one hand, and hunger and contempt on the other. But I thought it would be betraying the trust which was reposed in me. Afterwards some of that party desired a meeting with me; but I so satisfied them that I heard no more from that quarter.

At length I procured a place to preach in, and my hearers furnished it with a pulpit and seats. I saw now a little fruit of my labour: as I had a place to preach in, and a little society, which kept continually increasing; some of whom stand to this day, while others are gone to rest.

I observed above how kind Providence was in regard to the weather; for though it was a

remarkably wet season, yet I never was but once prevented from preaching abroad till the middle of November, and then only one night: so that it became a kind of proverb among the people, 'If it rain all day, it will be fair at night for the *load*,' that is, the lad, 'to preach on the Green.'

One little circumstance I cannot omit. Some time after my arrival at Glasgow, I found myself at a loss what to do in respect to the singing, having but a poor voice for this exercise; and as the people knew nothing of our hymns, I was obliged to sing the Scotch psalms. One of my hearers told me, if I pleased, he would be my precentor—that is, my clerk—to lead the psalms. At this I was glad; so we went on pretty well: but at length he made a demand of thirteen shillings and fourpence for his work, which was just fourpence a time. This did but ill suit my circumstances. However, I paid him his demand, and dismissed him and the Scotch psalms together. I now began to sing our own hymns, the people liking them right well; and in a little time I taught them to sing several of our tunes.

After the society was increased to forty or fifty, some of them began to inquire how I was maintained. They asked me if I had an estate, or some supplies from England. I told them I had neither; but having sold my horse, I had made what little I had go as far as I could. I then explained our custom to them. I told them of the little matter we usually received from our people. The poor souls were much affected, and they very liberally supplied my wants, as

also those that came after me. I stayed with them till the middle of April, and then bade them an affectionate farewell; leaving about seventy persons joined together. Though I had many trials in Glasgow, yet I had much opportunity to pursue my study; and the privilege of the college library was of singular advantage to me. But I own I did not live so near to God the latter part of my time as I did in the beginning. I seldom enlarge my acquaintance but I find it enlarges my temptations: so I found cause to cry out, 'Lord, pardon my trifling and want of deep seriousness!'

From hence I went to Edinburgh, and in my way turned aside to Stirling, where I spent three nights. On the Sunday, preaching under the side of an old uninhabited building, some young men got into the inside, and, going up stairs, threw off a number of the slates; but, though they fell just by me, I was not hurt, nor any one else. Leaving Stirling, I came to Edinburgh, where the brethren received me gladly. The Octagon was not quite finished, but the congregation was miserably small.[1] Several things had concurred to reduce both the society and congregation, particularly Mr. Hervey's *Letters*. I had soon the pleasure of seeing the congregation increase, yet not as I could wish; the place was never above half filled, even on Sunday evenings. I was therefore determined to take a new step.

The Castle Hill being the place of general

[1] The foundation was laid in 1765. See vol. i. of this series, p. 145. The building was pulled down in 1815.

rendezvous for all sorts of people, after they came out of the churches, about twelve o'clock, I was determined to preach there just at that time. It was disagreeable to stand up bareheaded in the blazing sun; but this I regarded not. My method was to preach in the Octagon in the morning, on the Castle Hill at noon, in the High School yard at four o'clock, and in the Octagon at six in the evening. As I generally spake with all my might, this was rather too hard for my constitution. However, by this means, I got the Octagon well filled on Sunday evenings, and helped the society a little. In order to establish societies betwixt Edinburgh and Glasgow, I preached in several towns which lie between, such as Barrowstounness, Linlithgow, Falkirk, and Kilsyth; but I fear with little fruit. The Scots are naturally shy, and suspicious of strangers; and anything in religion that appears new, or not agreeing with their established forms, they are exceeding jealous of. Hence class-meeting has the appearance of novelty, and has often been suspected to border upon the Popish auricular confession of sins, though a different thing: hence many in Scotland have been startled at it, and very loth to engage in it.

In October I left my much-esteemed friends at Edinburgh, and removed to Aberdeen. In crossing the Forth, which is seven miles from Leith to Kinghorn, I know not that I was ever nearer being drowned. There were several friends from Edinburgh, and, it being a fine calm morning, the regular passage-boat being gone, we hired a

small pinnace; but when we were about half-way over, such a sudden squall of wind arose, that we were in danger of being overset every minute. But by a merciful Providence we got safe over. That evening I arrived at Dundee, and preached three nights, having the place well filled with attentive hearers each night. At Aberdeen I met with a loving people; but, as the winter was at hand, I had no opportunity of enlarging my sphere of action. I was therefore determined to apply myself to study, and to live nearer to God than I had done. But a family residing in Aberdeen which came from Leeds, I immediately contracted an acquaintance with them; and this led me into company, which was a great loss to my soul. After I had spent some time, being fully convinced of my danger, I judged it best to flee; and a ship being ready to sail for Leith, I went on board immediately, taking an abrupt leave. Having scarcely any wind, we had a very tedious passage, as we could make but little way; but I never was with such a ship's company before. Every one on board, both sailors and passengers, came upon deck to prayers, and all kneeled down, except the man at the helm. After a slow passage we reached Leith. I hastened to Edinburgh, anxious to see my friends; the generality of whom were glad to see me.

As soon as the season would permit, Mr. Olivers being my colleague, we took our station on the Castle Hill, hoping for the same success which I had the last summer. But a circumstance happened which hindered our usefulness.

There had been, a few years before, a young man in that college, who met in our society. He appeared to be much alive to God, and was the leader of one of the classes. He had been in England for some time, had got ordained, turned predestinarian, and affected a popular character. He now came to Edinburgh, partly to do us harm, and partly for another purpose. In the latter design he failed; but in the former he was too successful. He would not preach in our place, nor even come to hear us; but preached at our usual times, and by this means drew away much people from us. There was neither matter nor method in his preaching; but he was loud and quaint; so he was much admired. It has fared with him as it has done with several others. He first turned Calvinist, and then to nothing. It is plain a man with little parts and little religion may do that harm in a short time which men of far greater parts and deeper religion cannot repair in a long period. For though my colleague was a man of good abilities, and did all in his power, as well as myself, yet could we not either prevent or remove the harm which one shallow young man was doing.

During my stay in Edinburgh this season, my time went on but heavily. I saw little good done; the congregations were small, and the society was very cold, and did not increase. It is really very heavy with me when I see God's work at a stand. Everything has but a gloomy aspect; my spirit sinks, and my soul is pained within me.

In September, 1767, I left Edinburgh, and at Dunbar was seized with an obstruction in my bowels, which seemed to threaten me with a final period to my feeble endeavours. I do not remember ever passing so dreadful a night. Being very providentially in the house of Dr. Hamilton, he took the right method with me, and in a few days I was enabled to set forward, though it was some time before I was free from the effects of that attack. The kind and genteel usage I received both from the Doctor and Mrs. Hamilton will not soon be obliterated from my grateful heart.

I preached at Alnwick, Newcastle, Darlington, and Knaresborough, and so on in divers parts of Yorkshire, being glad to see my native country and former acquaintance; and they appeared equally glad to see me. Blessed be God for Christian fellowship, and for Christian friendship! It has a tendency to soothe some of the rugged paths which we meet with in this wilderness, and perhaps may increase our gratitude in the bright realms of eternal day.

Before I dismiss Scotland, I would just take notice that I have reason to bless God some good was done by my poor endeavours: some sinners were brought to God; my labours, in the general, were acceptable; and the people gave me many proofs of their friendship, although my entrance among them was unpromising. On the other hand, I see much cause for humility and deep self-abasement. I see that I might have managed my mission abundantly better; I really was

r so holy nor steady as I might have been. ve reason to cry to the Lord, and also to apply to the blood of sprinkling, or I should be an outcast from God, and an heir of eternal misery.

This makes me now with bended knees,
  Thy daily care implore;
Confine me, Lord, if it Thee please,
  And let me rove no more.

O cause the golden girdle, love,
  To bind my heart to Thine;
Let me Thy little captive prove,
  Become Thy spoil divine.

I'll bless my sweet captivity,
  The cord that binds me fast
To Him who living lovèd me,
  And died for me at last.

My next remove was to Chester, where a change took place of such consequence to me that I should be much wanting in gratitude to a kind Providence if I passed it over in silence. I found it was expedient for me to marry, but it appeared a matter of great importance. Only two things in all my life had given me greater concern; namely, my acceptance with God, and my call to preach. What I wanted was, a person of grace, of good understanding, of a good natural disposition (for my own is violent), and one who had been well educated. I had contracted an acquaintance with one while in the city of Cork, in whom I had reason to believe the above properties met; she was descended from an

eminent French Protestant family, whose grandfather, among many others, had fled from the rage of Louis XIV., and had left his estate behind, only taking what effects he could carry along with him. She was early bereaved of her father, and not long after of her mother. My great objection was, the bringing of a person of her delicate constitution and education into such a way of life as she must expect if she became my wife. This I feared would be more than her spirits could bear. Besides I found a great aversion to bring any more burdens upon the societies; for she was left an orphan, and her affairs were very ill managed. Yet, believing it to be the will of God, I at length ventured upon this important step; for which I have abundant reason to bless God, and hope I shall do it for ever.[1]

Here I became acquainted with that amiable pattern to all young females, I mean Miss Gilbert,[2] who was born in the West Indies, and came to England to finish her education, and also to finish her life in the bloom of her days. She kept a daily journal for several years; and at the age of seventeen, a fever sent her to Abraham's bosom. I visited her in her illness, and was therefore a witness of that sweet resignation and consolation with which she was favoured. At the request of her friends I preached a funeral sermon on the

[1] Taylor married Miss Dupuy on September 18, 1767. See his sketch of her (*Methodist Magazine*, 1812, p. 42).

[2] Mary, daughter of Nathaniel Gilbert, of Antigua. Her journal was afterwards published.

occasion of her death from the affecting words of our Saviour, Luke xxiii. 28: 'Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children.'

The chapel was much crowded, and the congregation much affected. I printed the sermon, which I hope has been a word in season to many a troubled soul.

Before the end of the year, I preached one Sunday morning in the market-place at Salop, and met with no other molestation than a few clods and small stones. I gave notice that I would preach again in the evening, at a place called the Quarry. 'We will be ready for you,' said the people: and so they were; for when I drew near the place, there was a little army gathered together with clubs. They did not stay till I came to the place, but came on furiously, so that I was soon hemmed in on every side. They seemed a little at a stand when I demanded to know what they wanted. However, they rallied; and though they did not strike me, they kicked me about to some purpose. By degrees they hurried me into the town, up to the door of a house which belonged to a justice of the peace. I thought there might be something providential in this; and took the liberty of going in to desire his protection. The justice was at the coffee-house; but I sent for him. The mob by this time had filled the street, and were roaring like lions. At length the justice came. He said, 'Tell me who have hurt you; and I will send for a warrant for them'; and

after a little incoherent talk fairly shoved me out of doors into the midst of the mob. Providence held them from striking, or a very few blows might have ended the business. I likewise kept on my feet; for if I had once been down, there was no likelihood that I should have risen again. But I was covered with dirt from head to foot. All the filth they could scrape up was thrown, and when I attempted to turn my face on one side, I met it on the other. Which way to go I knew not; nor indeed could I go any way, but just as my masters drove me. At length I heard some cry out, 'For shame, for shame!' This occasioned a quarrel among themselves. Meantime, an honest man opened his door: so I slipped in, and went out by a back way, not much hurt, but dreadfully bedaubed; so that I really 'needed much washing to be touched.'

The next year, the society in Dublin being in much confusion, Mr. Wesley desired me to go thither. My affectionate partner was in a very unfit situation for crossing the water. The ship was so crowded, that we could obtain no beds, though they had promised one to us; yet they were taken up before we got on board; so that it was no small grief to me to see my dear partner three days and nights without a place where to lay her head. When we got thither, I was in great hopes, for several weeks, that the desired end would be accomplished. But my former antagonist coming to Dublin, who had been the occasion of the confusion, I had all my work to do over again. But he is gone, and I hope to

paradise. He occasioned my path to be very rough in Dublin.[1]

Notwithstanding some cross things, I met with many friends, who showed themselves very affectionate, and did everything in their power to strengthen my hands, to help me in whatever I stood in need of, and to comfort my afflicted wife. The Lord reward them for their kindness in that great day.

While we were there, my wife was delivered of her first child; and not being skilfully treated, she had such a complaint in her breast as was supposed to be a confirmed cancer. The anguish which I saw her daily in was such an affliction to me, as I never experienced before. This continued nine months, during which every means was tried that could be devised. At length, partly by a very abstemious diet, partly by taking quicksilver, with the application of boiled hemlock outwardly, through the blessing of God, a perfect cure was effected. But before this we removed to Cork, leaving our infant above a hundred miles from us. Though the nurse was a Papist, I have reason to believe that she did her duty to the child.

I found Cork was not as I had left it about four years ago. Then everything appeared lively: now, all was dull and languid; the prayer-meetings were dropped; discipline was not kept

[1] Though it was my misfortune not to agree with Mr. Morgan, yet there were many excellent things in him, such as I wish to imitate; and my reason for mentioning the above, is to caution myself and others against discord.

up; and the society was much decayed. I laboured with my might to revive the former flame; but hard it is to regain the ground which is lost.

A little before I left Cork, I was at Bandon one Sunday. It happened there was to be a review, on the Monday, of a regiment of light-horse. While I was preaching in the street, Colonel Walpole and all the officers came and behaved in a most indecent manner. On my speaking to them, the colonel ordered four trumpeters from the barracks into the middle of the congregation, and commanded them to sound. I gave out the stanza beginning—

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;

and when it was sung, began again: so that the poor trumpeters sounded till they were black in the face, and at last were fairly worn out. This so enraged the colonel, that he even foamed with indignation and blasphemies, and I expected every moment his cane would have been laid upon the poor men's heads. However, at last, they all retreated, and got little but shame for their trouble. As the colonel was in liquor, I took the liberty to send him a few lines the next morning, and was told he said he would not be guilty of such an indiscretion again for twenty pounds. But as I was preaching in the market-house the next night, the officers came again. They stood a while pretty attentive, and then broke out into horrid blasphemies, and were for forcing their way through the people to pull me

down. But a large number, chiefly old women, violently engaged them, and gained a complete victory; so that I was left in peaceable possession of the field, and finished my discourse quietly. The history of this engagement was published in the *Freeman's Journal*, and sent all over the kingdom.

In July, 1770, I left Cork, and set out for England, taking Dublin in the way. Here I stayed a few weeks, and opened the new chapel in the Gravel Walk; and received our child from the country, where she had been at nurse during our absence at Cork.[1] We embarked there in a small cutter for Liverpool, taking our little child with us. After we had got out to sea, there fell a dead calm, so that we could not move forward at all. Our provisions fell short. As for my wife, she, being sick, could eat nothing; and as for myself, I was not anxious. But I felt for the poor child, only seventeen months old. We had only a little very bad bread, and some stinking water; but the patient little creature would take a morsel of the bread, and drink a little of that water, and so lie down again quite content. The vessel was full of the most abandoned clowns, chiefly new recruits; so that their oaths and vulgar obscenity made it a kind of floating hell.

We spent the Sabbath at Liverpool, where I

[1] She lived to be married to a kind husband, and bore seven children; and on the 27th of June, 1801, finished her course in peace, and entered her rest, where I hope to meet her, never to part again.

preached to a large congregation out of doors. From thence we went to Chester, where we spent two or three comfortable days; and so on to Manchester, the place of my destination for the year. I was glad that I was in England again, where I expected to find genuine religion. I found my diligent and indefatigable predecessor, Mr. Mather, had done all that a laborious man could do to put the circuit into order, excepting that he had left a family in the preacher's house, which neither suited them nor us. Indeed the house wanted furnishing; but everything needful was easily granted. I have much reason to acknowledge the kindness of the people there; for I was more expensive to them than I have been to any circuit before or since. Yet everything was done without grudging. Here my dear partner had a long and dangerous fever; but no assistance was wanting, and all expenses cheerfully paid. They did the same when she lay-in; so that I had no weight or care on that head. Here I spent two comfortable years, and had the satisfaction of seeing some fruit of my labour; especially during the latter year.

While I was in the Manchester circuit, I published the discourse upon thoughts, words, and actions, entitled, *A Cry to the Professor's Conscience*, &c. I have the comfort to find that this plain tract has been useful, touching the very causes of backsliding from the living God. It pretends to nothing high or elegant, but purely that which is experimental and practical, and,

as such, has answered the end which I proposed. To God our Saviour be the praise![1]

My two years being expired, I left this agreeable circuit with much regret. I came into the Birstall circuit, expecting I was going into the land of Goshen. But, oh, the amazing difference! There was a general dullness; no discipline, and not one class met well. I scarcely ever came into so dreary a region. The singing of the people indicated the condition they were in; for the few that did sing sung as if they were half asleep. The congregations were so shrunk at Birstall, that the preaching on a Thursday evening was in the kitchen; and they had plenty of room.

The house was in great want of necessaries; for there was not one decent thing in it. It was highly necessary, if possible, to awaken the people. I began at Birstall, and so proceeded; but I soon found myself in hot water. When I wanted things a little more decent in the dwelling-house, the circuit echoed from side to side with my pride and lordliness; and many ill-natured things were said, which made my way very troublesome. One cause of this was that I thought it my duty to keep close to my study, except when preaching, visiting the sick, &c., or other necessary business called me out. This was construed into pride and stateliness. I think, for the first half year, I never had such a time in my life. However, being sensible I was doing

[1] Taylor's publications in Osborn's *Records of Methodist Literature*, number nineteen, principally sermons.

my duty, I determined to continue the same conduct. Rather than alter my plan, I would choose to leave the circuit.

Towards the latter end of the year, great numbers began to have a more favourable opinion of my conduct: they believed that I acted from principle; and God owned my poor labours. However, prejudice continued in many to the last; and when the Conference drew on, I found a letter was privately sent against me, in which my pride and niceness were not forgotten, and several surmises added, as if I was a Calvinist, and an enemy to the Church. They had their desire; and I had the happiness of being removed to Bradford.

My last year's treatment had left a soreness upon my mind; but it was soon healed by a kind people. I did not find much life amongst them at first; but whatever I said was well received; my fellow labourers also joined hand in hand, so that the work of God was greatly revived. This year I was visited with a fever, but found God very present and precious; so that this also was for my good. The second year we had a blessed outpouring of the Spirit; believers daily were multiplying, so that during these two years, above six hundred souls were added to the societies, and many, nay, most of them, continue to this day. This was printed in 1780: since then many of them are gone to glory. Great numbers were likewise renewed in love, and enabled to 'rejoice evermore, pray without ceasing, and in everything give thanks.'

My next remove was to Keighley. This circuit was a mere scarecrow on various accounts; so that I entered into it with little less than horror. There was a family in the preacher's house, which I was obliged to remove. The house was to furnish, and put into repair; and I had to beg the money up and down, which is not pleasing work.

The circuit was a large rambling range. I was to be but three or four days at Keighley in six weeks; and many of the congregations were very small; all of which were completely disagreeable circumstances. However, I entered upon my work in the best manner I could. I soon got the house put into good repair, and well furnished; so that my family were comfortably situated. God likewise revived His work in many places, so that between four and five hundred were added to us during the year; and the greater part were able to give a reason of the hope that was in them. A little before the Conference, having to preach one Sunday evening at Padiham, the house was by far too small for the congregation. It being a fine evening, we chose a convenient place to preach on out of doors. While I was preaching to a large congregation, the minister came at the head of a mob, in his gown and cassock, and dragged me down. As soon as I could, I mounted again, and again was jostled down. I attempted standing up a third time, but to no purpose; so we adjourned to the preaching-house.

Perceiving the Bible so much neglected, I preached from Psalm cxix. 11, at Heptonstall

[February 26, 1775]: 'Thy word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against Thee.' The people would take no denial, but insisted on my printing the sermon; which I have done, entitling it, *The Word of God a hid Treasure.* I have reason to hope it has also been useful. That is my great end both in speaking and writing.

In July, 1776, I went to the Conference at London, preaching at several places by the way, especially Nottingham, where there is a loving, sensible, judicious people; and at their request I preached in the market-place to a large attentive audience, all as peaceable as if they had been in the most solemn temple. Surely God has something to do in this town. From London I rode to Bristol, preaching in several places, with some degree of satisfaction, especially at Bath and Bristol; so in like manner in going from Bristol I preached at several places, as Gloucester, Worcester, Birmingham, Derby, and Sheffield, meeting with loving people, and liberty in speaking to them. To God our Saviour be all the glory!

Returning to Keighley, I divided the circuit into two very compact rounds, making Colne and the societies which surrounded it into a circuit by itself; by which means both the circuits are become very agreeable. But an unhappy affair happening at Colne put a great damp on the work there.

We had with much difficulty raised a fine large chapel; and being completed, Mr. Wesley came

to open it. Being much crowded, both above and below, and the timber of the galleries not being sufficiently strong, just when Mr. Wesley and I had got into the pulpit, before he began, all of a sudden one of the galleries sunk down, and abundance of people had legs, arms, or thighs broken. The confusion, as may easily be imagined, was very great; and the cries of such as were maimed, and such as were frightened, were truly piercing. Many false reports were spread concerning this awful adventure. Some said the whole chapel was in danger, and therefore durst not come into it. By one means or other, the work got a dreadful stun, which I fear it will not recover very soon.[1]

After spending my second year at Keighley, among a simple and loving people, in 1777 I set out for the Conference at Bristol, taking Manchester in my way; and there I preached in an open place near the Infirmary, to a large and well-behaved congregation. From thence I preached at Macclesfield, Wolverhampton, Worcester, Gloucester, &c.—I hope not in vain: and after the Conference I removed to Wednesbury in Staffordshire, where I had the less hopes of doing good, because my predecessor had done all that I could do in any respect. I found the house bare of furniture, the circuit poor, and trade bad; so that it was hard to put things in order. However, I set about it, and got my design completed in that respect. But still, the great business gave me much uneasiness; the

[1] Written in 1780.

societies were dull, and the congregations miserably small. Calvinism, Antinomianism, and downright Ranterism, had so laid waste this country, that there were small hopes of doing much good. My very soul sunk within me, so that at times it seemed as if I must faint. I cannot tell how they get their time over who can drag on and see no fruit. Were that my case, I should be ready to conclude that I was out of my place. To me this was a bitter and a trying season, going round and round, and seeing no good effect. However, when the new year came in, God revived His work. The preaching abroad, in the latter end of the summer, had excited many to come and hear. By hearing they were convinced, and many were brought to the knowledge of the love of God. I think near two hundred were this year added to the societies.

Birmingham, which is a principal place in this circuit, had for many years been very turbulent, by reason of the mobbing rabble; but at length an honest justice let them know their place, so that we have peace now. I preached one Lord's-day evening in a large square, called the New Market. I had much enlargement, and the multitude was still as night. I spoke from Luke xvi. 8: 'The children of the world are wiser in their generation than the children of light.' I have reason to hope this discourse has not been printed in vain; for it has been much read in various places. I have reason to think that our preaching out of doors in Birmingham was a happy means of increasing the blessed

work: for before that time we were cased up in an old shabby building, in an obscure, dirty back street; but soon after our going out of doors, a large new chapel was built; and since that two more.

After the next Conference, in 1778, I was appointed for the Birstall circuit, into which I came with fear and trembling, remembering the days of old. As my worthy predecessor, Mr. Pawson, had been much blessed among the people, and was much esteemed by them, it made my entrance the more difficult. He had much improved the dwelling-house, and had regulated several things, so that all who come after him will reap the fruit of his labour. I endeavoured to complete what he had left undone. There had been a blessed work in Birstall, where many were suddenly brought in; but the fire had not spread much farther. And as these were young converts, and not established, I feared we should have a sad falling away. But this was not the case: some few dropped off, and but a few. On the other hand, the awakening spread into most of the societies; so that I scarcely ever saw so extensive a work. We joined above seven hundred this year, and the greater part alive to God. I never knew so simple means made use of, in the hand of a gracious God, to bring sinners to Himself. Prayer-meetings were singularly useful, and so was the preaching; but thunder and lightning, dreams and visions, singing and praying, were all made use of for the awakening of sinners. I returned again into that circuit,

and what Providence has yet to do in me, or by me, I cannot tell. But here I am, a monument of amazing mercy, willing to lie in His blessed hands as clay in the hands of the great Potter, so that I may in all things be a vessel meet for my Lord's service; wishing only to finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received from Him.

This year being attended with much unction of the Spirit in the circuit, by bringing many poor wanderers to the fold of the true Shepherd, I had some sharp trials to grapple with in some private affairs. Among other things, I had a fine boy seized with fits in a violent manner; for one whole day he had them almost without intermission, for no sooner did he recover from one than another seized him. I was several times fetched home, as it was supposed that he was dying. One time, being fetched home near twenty miles off, on the same mournful occasion, and riding sharply upon a high causeway, and a hollow road on my left hand, my horse took fright at something, rearing upon his hind feet, turned round, and fell down into the hollow way upon me. The man who was with me attempting to dismount his horse too hastily, his foot hung fast in the stirrup, and he could not come to my assistance; only his horse was quiet and stood still, or his case might have been very bad. In the meantime my horse lay upon me as if he were dead: and it was well he did so; for had he attempted to rise or struggle with his fore feet, he would have struck me even in the face, and

might have killed me on the spot. I thought one of my legs was broken in pieces, as it lay under the horse upon a stone. However, with hard struggling I got myself from under; and after the numbness was gone, I found I could stand, though much crushed. One circumstance upon another began to impress my mind with uneasy sensations; but, riding in a lonely place, I saw a strip of clean paper lying on the ground: curiosity led me to alight and see what it was. The words written were verbatim thus: 'The love of Christ is a correcting love; whom He loveth He chasteneth, and correcteth every son whom He receiveth.' This was really a word in season, a sweet reviving cordial; and I know not that my mind has ever been so harassed since. By what hand the bit of paper was dropped, I cannot tell; but the hand of a kind Providence directed it to me.

Before I close this part of the narration, there are two things which in gratitude to my God I cannot omit.

I mentioned before, how desirous I was of improving myself in the original languages. After I had made some progress in Greek, having gone through the Greek Testament, and two or three of the classic authors in that language, I wanted to get an acquaintance with the Hebrew. I procured several books; but they did not answer my purpose. While I was in Edinburgh, I employed a Jew, a professed teacher of Hebrew, at an extravagant rate: but I soon found he was utterly insufficient for what he undertook, as

he knew nothing of the grammar; so that his teaching was a mere imposition. I began to despair of attaining it, when Robinson's Key came in my way, by which I readily went through the Psalms. I procured his *Manipulus Linguæ Sanctæ*; and by the assistance of that, with Buxtorf's *Lexicon*, I can read my Hebrew Bible with pleasure. I have a particular method of spending my time, which I have found of the utmost importance.

My method of spending my time is this. The time before breakfast is wholly devoted to my Hebrew Bible, comparing the original text with the Latin and English translations. I did, for some time, carry about with me the Septuagint translation, that is, the Hebrew Bible translated into Greek by seventy Jews; but finding it to be so wide of the Hebrew, I have laid it aside, only consulting it occasionally.

After breakfast I write, or read in some Latin author, till it is time to take horse. If I do not ride, I visit the sick, and others, till dinner. After dinner I generally read divinity, history, geography, or philosophy, till five; and then spend some time in my Greek Testament, and considering the subject I shall preach from that evening. After preaching, and the society-meeting, I spend the little remains of the evening in friendly conversation with such as happen to be present, till I retire. I then note down what has occurred in the day, and commit myself into the hands of my gracious God. This is my general manner of spending my time; but I find

a good deal of difficulty in keeping to it. Sometimes I want convenient retirement; so that I am obliged to pursue my study in the midst of children, noise, and confusion.[1]

There is a gross error which some of our people labour under; namely, that we are not to premeditate on what we are to preach; that God is to assist us in an extraordinary manner; and that all study and meditation are taking the matter out of His hands. Such a practice serves to patronize a sluggish, lounging temper; and is evidently productive of confusion, rhapsody, and nonsense. Indeed, if any one comes to me for advice, or in distress of mind, I directly lay aside everything else, and apply myself wholly to the case; but otherwise I keep to my regular plan. I wonder that every preacher does not keep something of a daily journal—more especially of what passes in his own mind. This I have found so useful, that I repent I did not adopt it sooner.

The other circumstance which I cannot omit is my commencing what is called an Arminian. I observed above that my first religious acquaintance were Calvinists, some of whom had been joined among the Methodists; from these I received such accounts as gave me a prejudice against them. I likewise read little else than Calvinian authors, and was much delighted with what is called 'moderate Calvinism.' Indeed

[1] The sole reason for inserting this is a wish to stir up some of my brethren to redeem their time; and what may seem a reflection in the preceding narrative is but applicable to very few. My brethren in the gospel I esteem above all men.

there is one branch of Calvinism, I mean 'reprobation,' what Mr. Fletcher calls its 'left leg,' which I never could cordially embrace. But still I hung in suspense till I read Mr. Wesley's *Predestination Calmly Considered.* Then I bade a final adieu to the damning of infants, and the consigning of unborn souls to hell. His *Appeals* likewise (which I heartily wish every person, not entirely drunk with prejudice, to read over and over) were of great service to me. I was now a kind of Baxterian, or rather Miltonian; for I saw first the scheme in *Paradise Lost.* And I still confess much may be said for that scheme of thinking, as it solves many difficulties, and tends to moderation; but still I held fast by Calvinian imputed righteousness, and Calvinian final perseverance. I call them 'Calvinian,' to distinguish them from scriptural imputed righteousness, and scriptural perseverance. In this mongrel state I was, when Mr. Wesley published his *Abridgement of John Goodwin on Imputed Righteousness.* I had never so much as heard of his name; and no wonder, for he was a condemned heretic among the Calvinists. This book I read; but I did not like it, as he was so unmerciful to my favourite scheme, so warmly set forth in my favourite author, Mr. Hervey. However, after some time I determined to give him a fair reading; and that I might be thoroughly satisfied, I read him over twice. I saw the truth as clear as the shining sun. I saw Calvinian imputed righteousness is downright Antinomianism. I still hung in suspense about final perseverance, and knew

not which side of the question to take. The authors which I had been accustomed to read were all warm advocates for it, and brought such texts, with their comments upon them, as seemed unanswerable. But Goodwin's *Redemption Redeemed* fell into my hands; towards the latter end of which he considers the Scriptures alleged, and the arguments brought, for final perseverance, and answers them in so masterly a manner, as has not left the shadow of a doubt upon my mind. So that I am firmly persuaded a man may make shipwreck of faith and a good conscience.

But though my own principles are fixed, I wish heartily that we could agree to grant each other liberty of conscience. There is no forcing of the understanding; the attempting of it has frequently lighted up the dreadful flames of persecution. I must confess, the ungenteel, unchristian, scurrilous treatment which Mr. Wesley has received from several of the opposite party has given me a very unfavourable impression both of them and the cause in which they are embarked. It is most certain, that the giving of hard names, with a deal of low buffoonery, will never advance the cause of the meek and lowly Jesus.

My next remove was to the York circuit, in which I met with many kind friends. They had just finished a neat, genteel house for the preacher's residence, and made everything very convenient. A small spot of ground before the front I turned into a neat little garden. I found

the people very loving, and the congregations increased; and I and my fellow labourers were received with very great affection. I preached abroad in several parts of the city, especially in the Thursday-market, being very willing to stir up the inhabitants to seek salvation.

Preaching one Lord's day (May 6, 1781), in the Thursday-market, the Lord Mayor sent his officers to forbid me, and to insist upon my coming down. I let the speaker deliver his message, and then resumed my discourse, taking no notice of what was said to me, as indeed it meant nothing saying anything to the officers, seeing they only did as they were commanded. I happened to be speaking from a text that was somewhat singular: 'These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also' (Acts xvii. 6). Our brethren thought it highly advisable to publish the sermon, as we expected to hear further from the magistrates. Accordingly, I wrote it down while everything was fresh upon my mind; and I have reason to hope it was useful in York, as numbers read it who perhaps never heard one of us preach in their lives; nor did I hear any more from the Lord Mayor.

The most disagreeable thing in this circuit is the smallness of the congregations; hence one is almost buried alive. There is but little trade in any part of the circuit; and where there is little trade, there is seldom much increase in religion. The people are chiefly farmers, and in general in a state of great bondage to their wealthy landlords, to whom they are a kind of vassals,

and in general dread them more abundantly than they do their Maker: and though some of them have got money upon their farms, with a deal of care and hard labour, yet there are others who are very hard set to live; and certainly they are some of the greatest slaves in England, for they labour hard, and live very poorly. In short, they seem to have little comfort here, nor any bright prospect of faring much better hereafter. However, there are a few who labour to keep their garments undefiled, and who are very loving to such as are sent to preach the gospel among them. I felt much union of spirit with them, and hope to meet them in the region of eternal bliss.

My two years being expired in this quiet circuit, I set out for the Conference at London, and took the road through Lincolnshire, and was truly pained to see how religion lay in ruins all the way to London. I preached in several places; but the congregations were pitifully small, and very languid and dull. From Huntingdon I crossed the country to Bedford, and preached there, and the next day at Luton; where I found my worthy friend Mr. Cole had built a small chapel, and it was well filled. During the Conference week I preached in most of our chapels in London, and found much liberty, especially at West Street, Seven Dials; and was glad to find the people in London love plain, simple preaching. I think the preachers, by labouring more for accuracy than life, miss the mark in London; and perhaps that may account for the deadness which hath

been complained of in that city for many years. I find the people of London want and love something which will affect their hearts, and stir up their souls.

In my return I took Luton, Bedford, and Leicester in my way, and had a comfortable time at Nottingham. The people seemed to drink in the word as the parched ground drinks in the vernal showers. Oh it is a pleasing task to preach to a judicious lively people! Such the people at Nottingham seem to be. I do not wonder that their chapel [The Octagon] is too small, and that they are engaged in building one larger, and in a more convenient part of the town [Hockley], which I hope will prove a blessing to many that are yet unborn.[1]

My destination this year was Sheffield, a place which will be dear to me while I can remember anything. In general I found things at a low ebb, and did not wonder much at that. However, I and my fellow labourers set about our work with great unanimity of spirit; and our different gifts seemed happily blended, and suited to the people. The large chapel was well filled; and though several detached parties set up, yet it seemed to affect us very little. It is true there were several unpromising places in the circuit; and some towns, especially Doncaster, a pretty, genteel town, but very destitute of religion. Since that time there is a blessed change in Doncaster for the better; insomuch that it is become the head of a circuit. Indeed, the chapel

[1] Wesley Historical Society *Proceedings*, vol. v., p. 165.

is in a very disagreeable part of the town, and the little society chiefly very poor. In winter evenings, they are pestered with the rabble, and in summer time few will come near. I tried to preach out of doors, but I fear it was to little purpose. However, Sheffield made an ample amends; and as we were a whole week in the town at a time, we had time upon our hands. We were three preachers, and managed with two horses; a scheme which is highly advantageous wherever it takes place. Add to this, there is a cordial love to their ministers: they really 'know them that labour among them.' They are loving and friendly, and whatever is wanted they are ever ready to supply, and take a delight in making their preachers happy. They do not look upon the cause in which they are embarked, as something by the by, which they are at liberty to let sink or swim; but they look upon it as the cause of God, the business for which Christ Jesus laid down His life; and as such they consider it as their duty, yea, their privilege and honour, to support and propagate it with all their might.

There is also a number of serious, sensible leaders, who interest themselves in carrying on the work of God; and though there are nearly thirty of them, yet for the two years which I had the happiness of being among them, we always met and parted in much peace.

Our Quarterly Meetings were conducted with great harmony and concord: every one took such care that we never ran short of money, so that there were no complaints, nor was there

cause. As they felt and cared for their ministers, so they considered everything in the way of housekeeping was become dear, and with great cheerfulness augmented the assistance to support the preachers and their families. For my own part, I have much reason to acknowledge the many favours, both public and private, which I and my family received from that affectionate and liberal-hearted people. May the Lord abundantly reward them! Indeed, I believe He does: many He blesses in their basket and in their store in an ample manner.

In Rotherham, in like manner, there are a few particularly dear to me, whose friendship and happy fellowship gratitude will ever oblige me to acknowledge in the most affectionate manner.

I have reason to bless God that I ever came into this circuit. His presence I have often experienced; and, glory be to His adorable name! I did not labour in vain. Good was done; sinners were convinced and converted; believers were strengthened and edified, and backsliders healed. Finding the glorious Godhead of Christ struck at by a number of men united, who called themselves 'the Unitarian Club,' I preached[1] and printed a sermon to prove that He who died for us is, in the most unlimited sense, 'over all, God blessed for ever.'

Application would have readily been made for my continuance another year; but as I knew it would be in vain, I desired them not to do it. And here, friendly reader, with the conclusion of

[1] In Norfolk Street Chapel, Sheffield, May 24, 1784.

my labours among this friendly and much-esteemed people, I will conclude this part of my narrative. May they, may you and I, happily meet in the kingdom of our Immanuel! Amen.

PART II

MANY years are now elapsed since I published a narrative of the most remarkable occurrences which had befallen me for the space of forty years; nor had I any intention of troubling the world any farther with my history, which may appear to have very little of an interesting nature in it, except to myself. But the part already published having been out of print for some years, and several wishing for another impression, I have determined to reprint it; and several changes having taken place in the body of people with which I am connected, and some in which I am a little implicated, I think it may be of use to add what I call 'a second part,' in which I may throw a little light upon some recent occurrences. Perhaps some may think that my attaching other things to my own narrative may be a deviation from the rules of strict biography. But I have observed in the reading of the lives of others, and in particular that of Mr. Baxter, that a variety of other circumstances are interwoven therein. I may venture to follow so good an example. The death of Mr. Wesley, the agitations which we have had respecting the Lord's Supper, service in what are called church-hours, and the attempts which have been made to rend and divide us, have happened in the space of a few years,

and have troubled the body in no small degree.

I removed from Sheffield to Halifax in the year 1784; and having had much comfort in that circuit in years past, I removed with some degree of satisfaction. But there had been a falling away; some had even grown cold and indifferent; and some, I doubt, were quite fallen asleep. I found cause of mourning that many had departed from the faith, and the greater part had left their first love. Indeed, it is no new thing. Whoever will read the Epistles to the Corinthians, Galatians, and the Hebrews, will find the same complaints; and looking into the epistles to the seven Asiatic churches, we see but two, that of Smyrna, and that of Philadelphia, which were free from blame, even in the apostolic age; and what a dreadful falling away soon after ensued, all that have any acquaintance with church-history cannot be ignorant of: all of which shows the propriety of that solemn admonition, 'What I say to one, I say to all, Watch.'

We were three preachers in the circuit; but one, Mr. Valton, out of three, was laid up almost the whole year.[1] I think he did not go through the circuit once. He was a gracious man, and an exceedingly useful preacher; so that want of his labour was a great check to our success. However, some souls were gathered in, and the work a little revived.

My next remove was to Leeds; which proved a trial to my patience, especially the first year. I always find where the reins of discipline are

[1] See vol. vi. of this series, p. 95.

slackened, it sinks the state of vital religion very much. I found it so here: and the mischief is, there is in people an unwillingness to be brought into order when they have been accustomed to live without it; and the minister who attempts the reform must bear his cross. There were several local preachers who ought not to have been private members, whose conduct was even immoral. I am at a loss to know what can induce men to preach who are destitute of the life and power of godliness. However, there were several very excellent characters among the local preachers; several of whom are gone to their everlasting reward. But very great care should be taken that men of unblemished characters alone be employed in the ministry of the word. The same care should be taken respecting the class-leaders; and then there is some hope that they will labour to make the people like themselves. Indeed, it is natural for the people to take the tinge of their guides. There were many excellent persons in the society at Leeds. I was well aware that many of our people seldom went to church, and received the Lord's Supper nowhere. Truly they had lost sight of it; there might have been no such command in the New Testament as, 'Do this in remembrance of Me.' Knowing this, I exhorted the people to attend the Lord's Supper, and happened to say the time would come when the Methodists would enjoy that ordinance among themselves, and in the meantime I wished them to receive it in the best manner they could. The very intimation of any

such thing was as bad as high treason, and I soon found myself in hot water. However, in the midst of trouble some good was done; and the second year was more peaceable, and consequently more comfortable.

In the month of November I was seized with a rheumatic fever, the severest affliction of body I ever remember labouring under. The pain was such that I could compare it to nothing but as if my limbs were tearing or twisting off. It brought me very low, and was the only time that I can remember when any one had to sit up in the night with me; and this laborious task my dear partner chiefly undertook. In the beginning I felt much comfort and confidence in God; but towards the latter end my head was considerably affected, and the slumbers I had were disturbed with wild and incoherent rovings; and very weak indeed I was. However, the Lord raised me up again; but the effects of that disorder, I suppose, I shall feel till the dust shall return to the dust again. It renders walking particularly fatiguing; for after I have walked a few hundred yards, the pains in my knees, ankles, &c., are so acute, that I am soon in a bath of sweat, and am obliged to sit down upon anything that I can find in my way. I have considerable difficulty in getting on horseback; so that I am not well qualified for travelling, either on horseback or on foot. I was obliged this year to submit to spectacles. I had perceived my sight gradually to fail for some time. This I attributed to the close attention which I had

paid some years before to the compiling the *Concordance* which I published; and being rather straitened for time, I did much of the work by candle-light without using a screen—a circumstance which I advise every one to attend to, who either reads or writes much by candle-light. I once thought my sight would last to the end of my days; but by making too free with it I am mistaken.

My next remove was to Manchester. I had laboured many years ago in this circuit with much satisfaction, and left it with regret. As there will be a thorn in every rose, so I found it here. A few who affected to be righteous overmuch, that is, who set up themselves as judges of other people, gave us some trouble; so that I was under the disagreeable necessity of putting two of those troublesome men out of the society. However, we had a considerable ingathering of precious souls, especially in Saddleworth; so that it was a pleasure to me to go into these rough valleys. But in every stage of life we have need to watch; so I found it in this circuit; and not being always on my guard, I sometimes gave way to trifling circumstances, which brought my mind low. Satan will make a corrupt heart subservient to his devices without due care. No matter how trivial a thing may be, if it stand between God and the soul it does much mischief. May I ever learn wisdom from slips and blunders; for I have many of these to bemoan. It is well there is a never-failing Intercessor, an Advocate with the Father, who can pity poor mortal worms,

whose grace is sufficient to heal backsliding souls, and to help in time of need. I may say, 'Enter not into judgement with Thy servant, O Lord; for in Thy sight I can neither justify myself, nor another.'

My next remove was to Hull; hoping that bathing in salt water might be of some use to my poor disordered son. Whether it was owing to the low, damp country, and scarcity of fire, or some other cause, I knew not; but my rheumatic complaints were troublesome, so that I could but walk very poorly. Indeed, in some places, the roads were so bad that it was impossible to go any quicker than a slow foot-pace, and then I was much pinched with the cold. In Hull, the congregations were large, and pretty well in Beverley; but in other places they were small and dull enough.

In the beginning of my second year, soon after the Conference, I had two providential escapes; and I should be very ungrateful to my gracious Preserver were I to forget them. In my return from the Bristol Conference, I took Sheffield in my way, and so through Rotherham and Doncaster, to Thorne; and there, hoping to save time and expense, I took a small boat, expecting to get down to Hull in one tide. But the boatman trifled away so much time in the morning that the tide was spent when we got to Brough, twelve miles short of Hull. My youngest daughter was with me; and in this place, when the tide is out, it leaves a very large space covered with mud and slime, so that it is very difficult to get on

shore, especially for women; and as we had to wait here more than six hours, I was sure it would be improper for my daughter to remain on the water all that time. I having my boots on, with the help of a staff, got on shore; but, it being so slippery, I durst not take my daughter on my back, lest I should fall, and throw her in the mud; the boatman being old and rather feeble, I durst not trust her with him, for the same reason. However, I saw a stout man, who had been catching eels, without shoes or stockings, and one that was accustomed to walk on those slippery places, and got him for sixpence to fetch my daughter, and he brought her safe on shore: thus far we were safe, and I was thankful. But still we were a little at a loss how to dispose of ourselves, for six or seven hours, till the tide should turn. There was but one poor little alehouse in the place; and that was crowded with men drinking, and far from being agreeable. However, we passed the time as well as we could, till eight in the evening, when we weighed anchor and embarked again. Heavy rain came on, and it was very dark; but we had no shelter, being in a little open boat. The wind meeting the tide made our little bark toss to some purpose. A young woman in the boat screamed out amain: my dear girl said not a word, though she apprehended we should be overset; but commended herself into the hands of our gracious God. Perhaps there was not much danger, but we thought there was, and at any rate our situation was very unpleasant; the waves tossed, the night

was dark, and the rain was heavy. About midnight we arrived in the port of Hull; and here, having to climb over the ships in the dark, I was very near falling into the hold of a large empty ship. I felt a touch of impatience at the man for bringing us into such a disagreeable situation. However, after some delays we got safe to our habitation. Thus will the storms of life end; and may we reach the haven of eternal repose!

> 'Tis there I'll bathe my weary soul
> In seas of endless rest;
> And not a wave of trouble roll
> Across my peaceful breast.

The next kind interposition of Providence was as follows:—A part of the circuit lies in Holderness; a large tract of low, marshy country; and, in order to drain it, there are large canals cut in different directions. They are so large that boats go on them, by which they carry the people's manure from place to place; and over these canals are bridges built of brick, in convenient places, for horses and carriages to pass over. Coming to one of these bridges, which was newly built, a man standing by the side of the canal said, 'Sir, I am doubtful if that bridge is not giving way. I think it is hardly safe for you to attempt passing over.' As I saw no danger, I feared none; and, thinking I should have a long way to go round to another bridge, and perceiving carriages had gone over, I went on; but before I got over, the whole fabric came down as if it had been cut off at each end.

It sunk under the horse: he dropped down perpendicularly; and I very gravely sat on his back. It had been dry weather for a long time, so that the water in the canal was low; which was very providential, or very likely both the horse and myself would have been lost. Another circumstance was very favourable; that is, a considerable number of men were at work in the field; and, hearing the crash of the bridge, they ran, and gave all assistance to help the horse out, or the water might have risen by the current being stopped, so that the poor animal might have been drowned before I could have got assistance, as the place was at a considerable distance from any houses. There was another circumstance which I considered as providential; and that was, had the horse taken a step or two more before the fall of the bridge, his fore feet would have been on firm ground, and, the bridge giving way behind, he would very likely have tumbled backward, and fallen upon me; and if so, it is very easy to judge what would have been my situation. But my gracious God gives His angels charge over His followers; for they are all ministering spirits sent forth to minister to them who shall be heirs of salvation. In these circumstances, I am persuaded of their kind interposition. It is true God does not need their interference; nor does He need men to preach, seeing He can convert souls without them; nor does He need men to till the ground, seeing He can cause the earth to yield her fruit without the tiller's toil; but He is pleased to use

His creatures as instruments, that thereby they may be stimulated to diligence, and excited to love one another, seeing that all are made subservient to the good of the whole: insomuch that the different members of society are all useful, even as the different members of the body are to the whole. In the most opulent city, the humble chimney-sweeper is as useful in his place as the chief magistrate.

On March 2, 1791, that great man of God, the Rev. John Wesley, paid the debt of nature. He ended his long, laborious, and useful life comfortably. That I had a crowded audience, far more than the large chapel in Hull could contain, was not to be wondered at; as I suppose that was the case in every place where a funeral sermon was preached on the occasion, which I apprehend was all over the three kingdoms. It was thought great changes would take place after his death, and various things were prophesied by people of warm imaginations. We had some little stir; I believe chiefly through a printed circular which was issued from Hull. I suppose it originated from some persons who professed to be warm advocates for the Church, and persuaded others to sign it. This document was sent to every circuit in the kingdom, and called an echo back from many circuits; so that it was thought there would be a division at the Conference; and perhaps steps by some were prepared for such an event. A scheme had been previously taken to divide the kingdom into Districts; and accordingly the preachers in the several Districts

met, and did what they could to prepare matters for the Conference, which assembled at Manchester. We had a large assembly, as might be expected; and many things were said *pro* and *con*, and in much better humour than might have been hoped. In the issue, it was determined by the majority to take up the plan just as Mr. Wesley had left it. This I saw would be a bone of contention the ensuing year, as it left our affairs in a very unsettled state. Vast numbers of people, besides preachers, attended at this Conference, that is, came to Manchester, all anxious to hear what the result would be. I was certain that such a decision would leave us worse than it found us; and so it proved. Indeed, we had a troublesome year. Printed letters were issued out on all sides, and all companies were taken up with debates upon old and new plans, to the injury of brotherly love.

My appointment was for Liverpool, where there were two warm parties. Not knowing what sort of provision there was for a family, or what kind of reception I should meet with, I judged it prudent to go alone, and leave my family at Manchester, where my eldest [daughter] was married, and had been settled some time.

When I came to Liverpool, things had but a discouraging aspect. I found the dwelling-house shut up, and it had been so for some time; everything looked very cold and naked, all just as it had been left; no steward nor any other person came near me. It was Saturday when I arrived. I preached that evening. On the

Lord's day a friend invited me to dine; and I preached morning and evening with some degree of liberty.

On the Monday morning the steward called upon me, and appeared in a friendly mood. He told me that if I would let things go on in the old plan, everything I wished for, I should have; but if I made any alteration, I must shift for myself—or to that effect.

After some days I received an address from ten leaders, vehemently requesting that there might be no service in church-hours, nor sacrament. About the same time I received another address from thirteen leaders (and, as I remember, three names besides, who stood neuter), who begged, in the name of their people, that I would let them have service in church-hours: they did not want to compel the rest of their brethren, but only pleaded for themselves, that they might have liberty of conscience, and an opportunity of bringing their families to the public worship at a convenient time. What made the matter more in their favour was, a new chapel was built rather on one side of the town,[1] and some said they subscribed on purpose to the building that it might be opened at that time of the day. On the present plan, it was of very little use, except on a Sunday evening; for on a Sunday morning very few indeed attended. We were two preachers in town, and had nothing to do, from the preaching at seven in the morning, till six in the evening; and our people were running hither and thither,

[1] Mount Pleasant Chapel, now the Central Hall.

hearing what was far from profiting them, or else staying at home; and two chapels were shut up during the best part of the day. Had not a large body of people requested it, however reasonable the thing itself might be, I should have let things go on in the same channel, for the sake of such as desired it. In a few days after came six of the leading men of the Church party, and wished to converse with me on the subject. We had a long conversation. I used every argument that appeared to be scriptural and reasonable; but it made no impression: all they could say was that it was the old plan, and God had blessed it; and Mr. Wesley had said, 'If the Methodists leave the Church, God would leave them.' I had another difficulty in my way. We had a new dwelling-house covered in, but it wanted finishing, and we were paying rent for another house in the meantime. The present steward would take no active part in it unless I would promise that no alteration should be made; and no one could interfere in the business but the man in office, so that we were at a stand. I knew that things ought not to continue thus; therefore, in a full vestry-meeting, I was determined to have the matter settled, and urged the steward to set the business forward, that we might not be paying rent for a house, and let our own run to ruin. After much reasoning, and even entreating, he utterly refused to act: so I was obliged to appoint other stewards to see our business carried on.

I was now urged to open the new chapel in the forenoon; and having waited several months,

and used every argument in which I believed both Scripture and reason would support me, to reconcile the contending party, but to no purpose, and perceiving that two-thirds of the society were grieved and hurt, I, on the 16th day of November, 1791, began the service at half-past ten in the forenoon. The ten leaders immediately withdrew, and took as many of their people with them as they could prevail upon. Several persons were set at liberty in that chapel in the forenoon service, and the society rapidly increased from that time. However, it was a time of much trouble to my mind. But if ever I did anything with a single eye in my life, it was my conduct at this time; for I am sure I had neither ease, honour, nor profit in view. As the body was convulsed, and as those throughout the nation who wanted the service at a convenient hour, and to have the Lord's Supper according to our Saviour's institution, were quite willing that their brethren should enjoy their liberty in going to church, &c.; as every other circumstance belonging to Methodism, both in doctrine and discipline, was to stand as it had done, nothing being altered, changed, or dropped; it seemed unreasonable that any part of the Connexion should put a yoke upon the necks of their brethren which they themselves were unwilling to bear. I published a pamphlet as a vindication of our conduct, and showed some weighty reasons for our proceedings. I hope it was useful.

As our brethren had lived so long without the communion, they wished for that ordinance,

knowing it to be the command of Christ; and they solicited me to administer it to them. I believed that I had a perfect right to do so. Moreover, when I was appointed by the Conference for Liverpool, I understood there were two parties; I therefore desired the Conference to give me my orders, so that I might know what it was expected that I should do. The answer was, that I might just act as I thought proper when I came thither, as I should be then capable of judging when I saw how the circumstances stood. Hence I judged that I had full power to act according to the best of my judgement; and that was my rule.

But there was one difficulty in my way, respecting the Lord's Supper: though I had been a preacher thirty years or more, yet I had never received any formal ordination by the imposition of hands; and although I believed it lawful, yet I did not think it expedient, to celebrate the Lord's Supper without some formality of that kind. I own I had some hesitation in my mind concerning the propriety of submitting to a human form, after being owned so many years by the chief Shepherd without it. I am certain that such a ceremony is not essential to a gospel ministry; and likewise the solemn admission into the awful office by a number of old, well-tried, and aged ministers of the New Testament, appears to me a real scriptural ordination. However, I submitted to a formal ordination. But there was another obstacle in the way. Our people have been exhorted to go to the Lord's Supper; but

numbers are very ignorant of the nature and design of the solemn ordinance. I therefore considered what I could recommend to them upon the subject. I could not recollect one single tract that was sufficiently explicit, clear, and concise. I therefore wrote one upon 1 Cor. xi. 28, delivered it in the chapel, and afterwards published it. I have the confidence to think I have seen nothing upon the subject that states that important ordinance in a clearer light.

The time of our District Meeting drew on, where I attended. My conduct at Liverpool was examined and approved;[1] and, farther, it was agreed that I should administer the Lord's Supper at Liverpool. Accordingly, I gave public notice that I should join with them in breaking bread in remembrance of Him who died for us. It was a blessed season in the general; and two poor captives were set at liberty, who desired thanks to be given in the evening to their gracious Deliverer.

The affair at Liverpool made so much noise that some of the preachers in the District would have a meeting upon the spot. I made no objection, though I deemed the meeting very needless. Six preachers came, three from our District, and three from other Districts. There were several things that I might have objected to, but I

[1] See Wesley Historical Society *Proceedings*, vol. ii., p. 95. 'We fully approved of what T. Taylor had done in Liverpool. He was ordained, and next Sunday is to administer the Lord's Supper.'—Letter of Rev. S. Bradburn.

really wanted peace, consistent with a good conscience. After a day's talk, it was agreed to drop the Lord's Supper till the Conference. This I submitted to. I did it for peace.

The Conference met in London in 1792; and I was of course arraigned at the bar for my conduct at Liverpool. However, I pleaded 'not guilty.' I could not see that I had committed any crime. I asked, Had I not full power given me from the Conference to act as I judged for the best? Had I not done so? But I had caused a division in the society. I answered, 'There would have been a greater division if I had acted otherwise, and a greater cause for it.' After various things had been said *pro* and *con*, the matter dropped, only my brethren in the opposition urged my removal from Liverpool the ensuing year. This I would not consent to, for two reasons: 1. My removing would imply that I had acted amiss—a thing that I was not conscious of; and, secondly, as I had taken much pains, and suffered much, in procuring the people what I conceived to be their just liberty, I was not willing that any one should be sent who would undo all, and drive two-thirds of the people from us. At length that matter was settled, and I was permitted to return again. Mr. Joseph Bradford was appointed to be my colleague. As he had professed himself to be on the side of the Church, it was thought he was appointed as a check upon me. However, I knew him to be an upright, worthy man, and therefore made no objection against him; and as it was determined to have no

sacrament that year in our chapels generally, I resolved to keep the order. We passed the year very agreeably, and had not one word of contention either about the sacrament or anything else. Nor do I remember ever passing an easier year in all my life. We began preaching at Ormskirk, got a place to preach in, fitted it up with a pulpit and benches, and a couple of rooms adjoining, one of which we got furnished for the preacher, whenever he came. A man and his wife occupied the other, and looked after the little chapel, and did what the preacher had occasion for while there. We also formed a small society. A considerable sum of money was begged for the above purposes; but I was heartily sorry that it was given up some time after we left the circuit. We had contended with much opposition by mobs and riots; but even these were quelled. A ringleader was taken up, and sent to prison; but, for the sake of his family, even our people begged him off, so that he was not tried at the sessions, to which he was bound: yet after the way was thus made, and matters in a fair way of being successful, it pained my mind to find that all was abandoned; and if ever the place is attacked again, very likely the rabble will renew their opposition.

Our numbers through the Connexion were less by three hundred than they were the year before; such a reduction I cannot remember we ever had. It was therefore determined at the next Conference that some places should have the Lord's Supper; and Liverpool was one. My appoint-

ment was Bolton,[1] to which place I came in very great hopes of peace and quietness. We had a good work at Bury, especially the first year: that society had been brought very low; but we had a gracious ingathering. Also at a place called Radcliffe we began a society.

Our Conference was this year (1794) at Bristol, and an uncomfortable time it was. We had much debate, and to little purpose. As our matters were not settled, and vast numbers of our brethren were still dissatisfied, a meeting was projected to be held at Lichfield, to see if some mode could be hit upon for the general good, to be offered at the ensuing Conference. Who was the author of the meeting I never knew to this day. Being not only invited to this harmless convention, but strongly urged to go, I attended. We met at an inn, supposing that we could meet without being taken notice of, as Lichfield is a place where no Methodists reside. I feared that the scheme would do more harm than good; and so it proved. As for our assembling there in secret, that was very improbable, as we were all preachers of long standing, and very much known all over the kingdom. My sole intention was to try any scheme that could be agreed upon to give our brethren, who desired it, all the ordinances of Christ. But when we were together, another thing was started: it was thought in many instances the Districts were not sufficient for the necessary discipline in certain cases,

[1]At Bolton this year he published his *History of the Waldenses and Albigenses* (pp. 322).

and therefore it was judged that some other mode should be thought on; which was, that a number of superintendents should be appointed by the Conference, to have the inspection of the whole Connexion. There was not so much as a thought that anything should be done without the concurrence of the Conference. For my own part, I was indifferent about the matter; and whether such a scheme would be for the better or no, I cannot say: it might have its use, and certainly would be liable to great abuse. However, the whole of this meeting gave great offence: the secret manner of holding it, and the place where it was held, all contributed to raise suspicions in the minds of the preachers who were not there. So that I may say, in the softest language, that little conventicle, though very harmless, did no good.

In 1795 our Conference was held at Manchester; and at the same time and place a meeting was held by many trustees and others, who were strenuous for what they termed the 'old plan.' Several messages passed to and fro, from that meeting and the Conference, to little purpose. At length nine preachers were chosen to draw up a Plan of Pacification, in which all were supposed to agree.

A scene opened this year which threatened the most terrible rent that had ever befallen the Methodists. It was introduced by a succession of productions under fictitious names, as Martin Luther, Paul and Silas, Aquila and Priscilla, &c. They were drawn up with no small degree of art, and calculated to gain the affections of such as

received them. There appeared much truth and a pretence of uprightness to run through the whole, so that many were highly prejudiced in favour of the writer. At length he appeared openly, by publishing a pamphlet, entitled *The Progress of Liberty*. In this virulent production, many things were published for facts without any proof. Many hints were thrown out calculated to prejudice the minds of the public against the preachers, especially the seniors. This pamphlet was eagerly bought up. Such as wished to find some objections against the preachers thought they now had the desired occasion. The preachers in London wrote to the chairman of the District in which Mr. Kilham, the author of the above pamphlet, was, to call a meeting, and try to make him sensible of the impropriety of his conduct, in publishing a pamphlet calculated to asperse the whole body of preachers in so scandalous a manner. The meeting was called; but it answered no other end than that of giving him fresh matter for slander and reproach; and, finding that he had won over a considerable party to espouse his cause, it made him the more confident, insomuch that he appeared bold enough to set all his adversaries at defiance; and, I suppose, he thought, either that the Conference durst not exclude him, or, if they did, that he would become the leader of a large party both of preachers and of people. Thus matters went on till the Conference; and many of the preachers thought very favourably of him till his trial came on; but then, hearing

him make so poor and lame a defence, and owning that he had asserted many things without any sort of proof, they saw a little more into the man and his motives, and of course their minds were changed: they viewed him in a proper light. Much lenity was showed him, he owned; but he demurred to the legality of the court. He pleaded for a public hearing; that is, that his trial should be in the public chapel, and that all might come forward to hear and see, and all that chose might be permitted to speak. This by no means could be admitted; for every united body have a right to try their own members: and as for witnesses, there needed none; for the witnesses against him were his own books. If he could vindicate them, he was clear; if not, there could only be two things, one of which must be done: the one was, to own his fault; the other was, for the Conference to pass what censure or judgement they thought proper. Several days were taken up in labouring to convince him that he had acted wrong in publishing so many things calculated to prejudice the whole nation against the preachers, and thereby to render their labours ineffectual; and the greatest part of what he had written was either conjectural or upon misinformation. But though he was confounded, and had little to say for himself, he appeared confident enough, judging from his abettors that he had little risk to run; for it seems that he had been encouraged on his way from Alnwick to London. Indeed, some hints were thrown out that the Conference durst not

expel him; his party was so strong that, let his cause be what it would, he must be kept in, or we must sink. At length, the vote for his expulsion passed the Conference, without a single voice to the contrary. In giving our vote in Conference, all that are for the question stand up: it is then reversed, and all who are against it stand up. The vote of his expulsion passed both ways; and, to render the matter more firm, the sentence was written in a book, and laid on the table; and all who believed his sentence just were requested to sign it, which was done by the whole body, I believe every individual except myself; and the reason why I did not was, because it was my office[1] to deliver the sentence of Conference to him, which if I had not believed to be just, I should not have done. Such was the conduct of the Conference with respect to Alexander Kilham; and I firmly believe that all who took the lead in that transaction were led by the strictest uprightness, and acted in the fear of God.

We had really a troublesome year, and much hurt was done, but more especially when a majority of trustees could be found on his side: there they violently took our chapels from us, and herein showed that they were unfaithful men. It was once thought advisable to commence a suit in the King's Bench, to try the legality of such unjust proceedings; but, considering the tediousness, expenses, and uncertainty of litigations, we judged it best to try to build new

[1] As President of the Conference.

chapels where we had a prospect of doing good, and so leave the robbers in possession of their spoil.

The Conference came on at Leeds in 1797; and it was confidently given out that a vast number of preachers would join what was called the 'New Connexion.' A vast concourse of people assembled at Leeds, and Mr. Kilham and his friends took a vacant Baptist chapel, and formed themselves into a Conference: several of our preachers seemed to waver, and, as we understood, attended their meetings as well as ours; and several we thought would join them; but in the issue, three and only three, travelling preachers actually joined them.[1] In the latter end of December an accident happened to Mr. Kilham, which took him off. A small bone stuck in his throat; and though it was extracted, yet some vessel broke, so that it proved his end. A life thus closed in the very height of so much disturbance raised in the church of God would naturally lay a foundation for various reflections; and various things were said: however, his friends said he died in much peace. Before I close this unpleasant subject, I would make a remark or two.

We see that however obscure or useless a person may be in the church and state, yet he may be extremely hurtful; and though not an instrument of good, yet an instrument of much harm. We have many instances of this in history. It is certain that during the twelve years that Mr. Kilham travelled in the Connexion he was of little

[1] 'Two of whom have left them.'—*Taylor.*

use, as Mr. Pawson has made appear from the Minutes, tracing every place where he travelled, and the numbers in the societies; and truly, he made so small a figure that I am inclined to think many preachers did not know him. I never heard him, but I have been told that his gifts as a preacher were rather beneath a mediocrity. But I am not acquainted with any man that ever entered our Connexion that ever did half the mischief. I fear that in Lancashire and Yorkshire many are driven into infidelity and to eternal ruin. A fool may so fire a house or a town that all the wise men in it cannot extinguish the flames.

Again: I would observe, suppose I am in one of the most regular families in the kingdom, and am determined to act the dark ill-natured spy: I have my doomsday-book, in which I mark every little slip, in word or deed. I put it down with my own meaning, or comment upon it; after I have waited for a convenient season, I bring into judgement this partial chronicle against the person or persons, with all the ill-natured reports that I have been capable of scraping together; might not the most innocent characters be thus made to appear as black as midnight? Now, if that may be the case in a private family, what shall we say concerning so large a body as the Methodists? That this was the case and conduct of Mr. Kilham must appear to every impartial inquirer into his proceedings.

I would further observe that when persons become advocates for a party, they will act very

inconsistently with their natural turn of mind. From Mr. Kilham's pamphlets many were made to think that Methodism was a very expensive system, and that the people were fleeced and half plundered. He has thrown out many hints as if the preachers were really making a gain of the people, and more especially the old preachers. There are none who travel in the Connexion that have been longer in it than myself: of course, I am implicated in this condemnation. I now write in the presence of Him who sees the secrets of all hearts, and shall fairly represent my own case; and very likely it may be nearly that of many senior preachers.

I began to preach among the Methodists occasionally in the year 1760. In the beginning of the year 1761 I might be said to begin to travel; that is, I supplied the lack of service of several preachers, when they were sick, or went to see their friends at a distance, and particularly in the Birstall circuit, which was then of great extent, and also in Leeds; and this I continued to do till August, when I set out for the Conference at London. What I did was gratis, not even having a penny for the turnpikes; except that the steward of Bradford circuit gave me once half-a-guinea; and when I set out for the Conference, the steward of Leeds circuit gave me fifteen shillings. I had a little money of my own, and some articles to dispose of: the latter I left in the hands of a person to sell for me, which he did, and, being poor, he disposed of the money, and soon after died; so that business was settled.

I set out for London, and from thence into Wales; here my work was rugged and disagreeable enough. I had no quarterage, no travelling expenses, but now and then a shilling or half-a-crown was put into my hands. Sometimes I was obliged to dine and lodge at an inn, and to pay both for my horse and myself. In this manner I passed the year, preaching as I could, sometimes under cover, and often in the open air, even throughout the winter, which, some may remember, was very severe. Some time before the Conference, I made an excursion into Carmarthenshire and Pembrokeshire, counties in which none of our preachers had ever set foot. It appeared to me that in Pembrokeshire there was a probability of doing good, as I preached several times in Pembroke town, and in various other places: accordingly, I was sent from Leeds Conference back to Pembrokeshire, where everything was quite new, nor had I one shilling given me either for the expense of my journey thither or for my support when I got thither. But it may be said, 'How did you live?' I lived upon my own stock, till Providence raised me friends. I formed a circuit, including about two hundred and fifty persons by Christmas; and at the end of the year I went to the London Conference; but still at my own expense, except some small matters which a friend here and there might give me, which could not amount to much, as the people were generally poor. From the Conference at London I was appointed for Castlebar, in Ireland. Here for the first time I received

thirty shillings from Conference for my expenses on the way. Fifteen shillings I paid for a place on the outside of the coach to Bristol, besides the expenses on the road; twenty-seven shillings I paid the captain for my passage to Dublin, besides provision, mate, sailors, &c. When I got to Dublin, I had about a hundred miles to travel to Castlebar; and even there my allowance was very short. I think when I left Wales, my stock was about thirty pounds. It was considerably reduced by the time I got to Castlebar. I stayed two years in Ireland; and from Limerick I came to the Manchester Conference. My stock of money was now reduced to about fifteen guineas. It was thought there was a probability of raising a society in Glasgow, and I was appointed to make trial; and out of my fifteen guineas, I gave nine pounds for a horse, saddle, &c. I received from the Conference three guineas to take me to Glasgow—a place where we had no society, no place to receive me, no place to preach in; strong prejudices to oppose; and a long, cold, dark winter before me. How I passed my time there is already related. My second year in Scotland was agreeable, particularly in Edinburgh: there all my wants were abundantly supplied.

In 1767 I left Scotland, being appointed for Chester. I bought a horse out of my own pocket, nor do I remember that I had anything for travelling expenses. When I came to Chester, my property amounted to six guineas. Judge now how rich I was become after near seven years of hard toil and labour. In Chester I

married a wife with a little property, the greatest part of which I have lost by a person breaking. From Chester we were appointed for Dublin, and had two guineas to take us thither: there we had all things richly to enjoy. From thence we removed to Cork. Meantime my wife bore a child, which we were under the necessity of putting out to nurse, my wife being so greatly indisposed. All I received that year for my wife and the nursing of the child was either four pounds or four guineas. From Cork we were appointed to Manchester; and I think it was either three or four guineas that I had to take my wife and child thither. I will further add, for twenty years what I have received for preaching has not kept my family with food; and I can assure my reader we do not keep an extravagant table.

Now let any of Mr. Kilham's abettors judge what cause there is for all the reproach and slander which he has raised against the old preachers. Nay, let them judge between him and me, in one instance. He was appointed from Newcastle to Aberdeen, where everything was provided, a house, fire, candles, stipend, for himself and family; a large friendly society, and fifteen guineas to take him thither. I was appointed from Limerick, in Ireland, to Glasgow, above six hundred miles—no society, no lodging, no place to preach in, no friend to advise with, nothing for either board or quarterage; and three guineas were all I had for the whole. Now, I say, let his friends judge between us. He came

among us a poor servant; and it is surprising to me if by one means or another, he has not left some thousands behind him. If it should be objected I am boasting, I may say that matter of fact has compelled me; and I write thus in the just vindication of myself and my fellow labourers who have borne the burden and heat of the day. Mr. Kilham and many others have entered into and enjoy the fruit of our labours, which many of our junior brethren gratefully acknowledge.

Several things concurred to make the years 1796 and 1797 a trying season to me, such as I pray God I may never meet again. But they are over; yet the remembrance is bitter to me. I have been foolish enough to expect fair gales till I arrive at the haven of eternal repose; but I have in this been disappointed.

However, in those stormy days we had some fruit in Oldham circuit, especially in Saddleworth. I left that rough valley in a very promising situation in 1789; but there had been a withering time, and we found them very low. But the Lord revived His work amazingly, so that the chapel was far too small on the Lord's day; and in different places where we preached in private houses on the week-days, we had good congregations, and not without fruit.

My next remove was to Halifax. Here I had laboured in years past with much satisfaction. I might have expected something extraordinary, as we had heard of a wonderful revival, and of scores being converted in an evening: but if so,

there had been a dreadful falling away; for certainly they were in a very low condition. The matter was that during the noisy time, which was called 'the revival,' all discipline was laid aside; sensible people were shocked and disgusted at seeing such irregular and unscriptural proceedings; little fruit appeared; many poor men ran themselves out of breath in staying late at nights, and neglected their families, and even their labour, and of course got into debt, without taking conscientious care to discharge it. I doubt that is an evil too general. I believe oftentimes God begins a good work, but poor ignorant men will needs take it out of His hands; and by noise and clamour, striving to work upon the passions of people without their judgements being informed, bring it into confusion and contempt; and by this means the enemy gains no small advantage. I have ever been fearful of damping or hurting the work of God, and therefore have borne with things which I did not approve of; thinking there might be more of God in those irregularities than I was aware of. But to speak in the softest terms, many, very many, of those hasty converts have proved like the stony-ground hearers—in the time of temptation they have fallen away. Now, if there is indeed a work of grace upon their hearts, inquiry should be made whence they came, and how that work began, and appoint a time and place where they may be farther instructed, by having their judgements informed in things which are essential; and if they can read they should be pointed to

suitable passages of Scripture, and directed to meet in class with some proper leader, so that the work may be established, and the divine seed nourished, and the work confirmed in their souls.

In 1799 I removed to Bristol.[1] I could have wished to find this venerable mother-church in a more lively situation than what it was really in. The wound which was made by the division of a few years before was not healed. I think both I and my colleagues did what we could to bury old grievances; but the deadly effect of the old enmities were not destroyed. My hands hung down, fearing I was labouring in vain, and spending my strength for nought. Week-night congregations were small, the classes did not meet so well as I thought they might; this bowed down my spirit, and often made my hands weak, and my knees were feeble. And yet there are many excellent ones in this city, whose names will be found in the book of life.

In the month of May I made an excursion into Cornwall; in which I confess I was highly gratified, both there and in my way thither, particularly at Plymouth Dock. On the Lord's day I preached in the forenoon at the Dock, and at two at Plymouth, and administered the Lord's Supper to a considerable company of communicants, and returned to the Dock, and preached at six. Being under the necessity of being at St. Austell the next day, and the coach setting out the next morning at six from Tar Point, which

[1]At Bristol he published his *Sixteen Lectures on the Epistles to the Seven Churches* (pp. 321).

lies on the other side the water, a friend sent me word that he should be glad if I would take a bed at his house. The evening being fine, about a dozen, chiefly young persons, took a boat, and, being singers, they sung several hymns, which I felt very sweet; and as we passed by several first-rate men-of-war, which lay at anchor, it brought the men upon deck, but I did not hear one scoffing word from any of them. I do not remember ever to have enjoyed a little trip with greater satisfaction in all my life. I likewise met with very kind treatment at the house of my kind host, and slept comfortably for the first night in Cornwall. The next morning at six I set out for St. Austell; and when I came to Liskeard, I found that preaching was published for me there that evening. I was sorry I could not stay; for it is a noted place for Deists, as I am told, and especially for the disciples of Mr. Paine; and, as it was known that I had answered his *Age of Reason*,[1] I understood many of that fraternity intended hearing me. I met with very kind treatment at St. Austell, and had their chapel well filled two nights. A kind friend took me in his carriage on the Wednesday to Truro, where we had a crowded audience, and a good congregation the following morning. I feared my time would not allow me to get so far as Penzance and the Land's End; but the kind friends so ordered matters that my wish was gratified. On Thursday I came to Falmouth, where Mr. Wesley had like

[1] *An Answer to Paine's 'Age of Reason.'* Published in 1796 at Manchester.

to have lost his life[1]; but all is peace now. We had a full chapel, and several preachers were so kind as to give me the meeting. On Friday, May 16, I came to Helston; but the night was very stormy and rained much, and, the people living wide, our congregation was not so large as was expected.

Saturday, 17.—I came to Penzance; and, as in every place before, was received with much kindness. In the evening I walked to Newlyn, the native place of Mr. Jaco.[2] On Sunday morning I had a sweet season at Penzance in speaking from Phil. ii. 5. In the evening we were a little at a loss how to proceed: the chapel was too little, and the wind was so high that there was no preaching abroad; but they removed such benches as were movable, as many got into the house as could, and the remainder stood at the windows. But we were warm enough within. However, I hope the labour was not in vain. On May 19 I was resolved to gratify my curiosity with a sight of the Land's End; and really a tremendous sight it is; the high rocks, with the deep caverns, caused by the turbulent waves, made everything look awful. Here Mr. Charles Wesley made the verse,[3]

> Lo! on a narrow neck of land,
> 'Twixt two unbounded seas I stand,
> Secure, insensible, &c.

[1] See *Journal* for July 4, 1745.
[2] See Vol. ii. of this series.
[3] See, however, *Methodist Hymn Book Illustrated*, p. 429.

I wished to have made a little trip to the isles of Scilly, but time would not permit. From the Land's End I went to St. Just; and although they had just enlarged their chapel, it was well filled. One would wonder where the people came from; for St. Just is but a village, which lies on a point of land among rocks and mines, and appears to have few inhabitants near it. I returned after preaching to Penzance; and on Tuesday I went to St. Ives, one of the most agreeable towns for situation in Cornwall. It is in the form of a crescent in the bottom of a fine bay, which opens into St. George's Channel, and a place of considerable trade. The chapel is large; and it was well crowded with many of the better sort, and I think some clergy. I had liberty in pointing out the Lamb of God who taketh away the sins of the world. I partly expected to preach the day following at Copperhouse, a place so called on account of many copper-works in the neighbourhood; but as I could only preach at noon, and the people could not leave their work at that hour, I passed on to Redruth. Here the enlarged chapel was well filled, and I was entertained with much kindness and respect by a family whom I have heard much spoken of, namely the Harpers; and a number of Christian friends gave me the meeting. The Methodists have Redruth to themselves: theirs may be called the established religion; for the church is a considerable way out of the town; and there are no Dissenters, except a very few Quakers.

Thursday, 22.—I preached at Gwennap, and the enlarged chapel would not hold the people; but the wind was so high that I could not preach abroad; so as many crowded in as possible, and the rest around the windows. The next day I went to St. Agnes. Cornwall abounds with saints; and I hope with many of the right sort, even such as God hath made saints. This is a small town, which lies among rocks and mines; and the people have enlarged their chapel, which was well filled; and as there had been a considerable work of God, I enforced Heb. ii. 1, and hope it was not in vain, though I was sorry to hear of a refractory spirit manifested in some. However, as my visit in Cornwall was that of friendship, and in no official capacity, I did not think it proper to interfere in any disputes, except by giving a word of advice where I thought it was likely to do good. From thence I returned through Redruth to Tuckingmill, a small village containing but a few houses; yet there is a chapel, which will contain, perhaps, twelve hundred hearers; and although the afternoon and evening were exceedingly stormy, yet the chapel was well filled, and I had much liberty. The night continued very stormy, and there was no probability that either the chapel in Redruth or Gwennap, where I was to preach on Sunday, would contain half the people that were expected to attend; for it was given out twenty miles round about that I should preach in what the Cornish term 'the Pit,' but Mr. Wesley calls an 'amphitheatre'; that is, a large hollow, which

will hold abundance of people; and it is astonishing how it excites the country to flock together when it is reported that any one is to preach there. Moreover, it is remarked that it is sure to be a fair day when there is to be preaching in the Pit: however, my faith was put to the stretch, as it was so stormy a night. But I was told a number of young men spent a part of the night in prayer. Yet in the morning it looked very unpromising, and was so wet that I was obliged to preach in the chapel at Tucking-mill, and we squeezed as many in as we could. However, before I had done it cleared up, and, the sun breaking out, the street in Redruth was quite dry at noon, and at half-past one thousands were gathered. I stood in the most vacant place, and urged upon them that awful passage, Job xiv. 10. All were still as night, listening with deep attention; even the Quakers mixed in the crowd. From thence we hastened to the Pit; and, to be sure, it was amazing to see horse and foot flocking from all parts, and some carriages. My friend who accompanied me said he thought there were a thousand horses: however, I suppose, there might be some hundreds; and a multitude of poor little ragged boys on all sides came to earn a penny by holding the horses, so that they were kept at a proper distance from the congregation. I do not remember to have preached to so great a multitude, except once on the Green at Glasgow. It was truly an awful sight. But I cannot say that I had that liberty which I have sometimes. Indeed, I had

a charming time at Tuckingmill in the morning, and at Redruth at noon; but I seldom find that sweetness three times running. Besides, I had exerted myself the two former times, particularly in the street at Redruth, so that my strength rather failed me, insomuch that I grew somewhat hoarse; and perhaps my gracious Lord might see it meet to leave me a little to myself, seeing He takes gracious methods to hide pride from our eyes, and keep us dependent upon Himself. It is amazing how such a spot should ever be chosen for a place to preach in, amid rocks and mines, and scarcely a house near it; and that it should continue to excite the curiosity of people to come from such a distance to hear the word of God in a wilderness. As I had a considerable distance to travel, and preach twice the next day, it was thought advisable to proceed to Truro, as that would shorten my journey nearly ten miles; so here I rested in peace and plenty, humbled under a sense of God's amazing goodness and my own vileness, yet hoping I had done something for Him.

Monday, 26.—We set out rather early, and stopped at a place called the Indian Queens, to breakfast. From this neighbourhood came that worthy man, John Murlin; and I saw his elder brother, a serious old man, ripening for glory; though I could perceive him very anxious respecting the legacy left by his brother. I told him it was in safe hands, and would be paid at the appointed time. What a temptation, or a snare, is this world, even to good men! We

got to Bodmin by twelve o'clock, twenty-three miles from Truro, where I preached to the smallest congregation I had in Cornwall. Though it is a principal town, and where the assize is held in summer, yet I find our interest is small in it.

From Bodmin I crossed the country, about fifteen miles, to Port Isaac. The road was so very bad as almost to set us fast in some places; and very hilly. However, we got in time to preach to a crowded audience, and were cordially received by an old disciple, an Israelite indeed. The situation of this small town is singular. It lies at the bottom of a narrow creek, and in a narrow compass, surrounded on all sides by very high hills, except the opening to the sea; and it does not appear that it can be enlarged, it is so enclosed on every side. However, the gospel has found its way thither for many years, and not in vain.

Tuesday, 27.—We had to remount the hills out of Port Isaac to Camelford, where I was to preach at noon; and although it was the middle of the day, and not many Methodists in the town, yet we had the chapel filled: and a precious time it was, I believe, to the people as well as myself; so that I trust my labour here was not in vain. But, having a stage of sixteen miles to Launceston, where I had to preach in the evening, we did but just arrive in time to preach to a crowded audience; and I had considerable liberty in describing the way to the kingdom to be through tribulation. Here I hope the word was made profitable; and here ended my excursion through

Cornwall. This I must say for the Cornish, both preachers and people, they treated me with very great kindness, and showed me much greater respect than I deserved. There would be no great cross in itinerating in this manner, where in every place all things we wish for are made ready to one's hand. Groups of kind friends waiting in every place to receive one, and crowds assembling to hear, are exceedingly pleasing; and all the company in every friend's house looking up to one, as to a superior species of being. How flattering to vanity! And what need of an humbling ballast! How different is this state of things from that of our circuits in the general, where we must experience an humbling reverse! Amid all the kindness in Cornwall, the Lord gave me a sense of my own unworthiness, which kept me low in my own esteem.

I wished to pay another visit to the loving society at Plymouth Dock, on my return, but time would not permit; and I did not know but that I was to preach at Tiverton in Devonshire the next day. It was necessary that I should be at Exeter by noon, a distance of forty-four miles. I therefore rose early; and truly the morning was lovely, and the front of my chamber opened into a fine country; the winged choristers were all awake, and their different notes were charming; but my business required haste. I got to Exeter by one o'clock; but hearing nothing from Tiverton, I was very glad to rest where I was. Exeter is delightfully situated. I walked through the spacious cathedral, saw

the monuments, the library, and the skeleton of the young woman who was executed some years ago, as I was told, for the murder of her child. But, however agreeable the situation of this city is, religion is at a very low ebb in our Connexion: I had the smallest congregations here that I have seen since I left Bristol. Yet there are a few sensible lively souls even in Exeter.

Thursday, 29.—I preached at Taunton, and looked into the large church from whence that great and good man Joseph Alleine was ejected. I venerate the places where those worthy men laboured; and what a loss did the Church of England sustain when her rulers expelled from her pulpits two thousand good men, among whom were Joseph Alleine, Richard Baxter, and Philip Henry!

Friday, 30.—I came safely to Bristol, and found my dear family all tolerably well. All thanks be to God! I stand amazed at His goodness to me: even this little tour impresses a fresh sense of His mercies upon my mind. But I feel pain that the work does not thrive as I could wish to see it in this circuit; and yet there are many precious souls whom I have cause to love, and who, I believe, walk humbly with their God.

The Conference drew on; and a brother having been dead some time at Lambeth, and leaving me joint-executor with his widow, the property being in London, in different hands, and a considerable number of legatees, it seemed necessary that I should be on the spot, in order that I

might do my best to see the property collected, and the legacies paid. I therefore left Bristol, after being one year there, and removed to London, where I and my family arrived August 20, 1800.

Having now taken notice of the most material matters which have occurred during forty years of my ministry, and sixty of my life, I must here close, perhaps finally. The above space of time has been filled up with mercies innumerable from my gracious God. He hath borne with my numberless blunders, inconsistencies, and imperfections; and I hope the time and labour have not altogether been in vain. A vast number of my junior brethren have got before me, having finished their course, and entered into the joy of their Lord, while I am still in the wilderness, still in the field of battle. They have entered the haven of rest, while I am

> Still toss'd on a sea of distress,
> Hard toiling to make the bless'd shore.

Too, too many, during the above period, have turned aside, and plunged back into the world again, while I, O infinite mercy! O boundless love! have been happily preserved; preserved even when I otherwise should have departed from the living God.

> Turn aside, a sight admire,
> I the living wonder am;
> See a bush that burns with fire,
> Unconsumed amidst the flame.

As it is highly probable I may never trouble the public with any farther account of so unworthy a subject as myself, there is one thing which I would pointedly notice to all my brethren in the ministry; and that is, to beware of spending too much time in company among their richer acquaintance; but spare a little to look into the habitations of the poor. The poor have the gospel preached to them; our Lord was poor; He associated with the poor; and, I can assure my brethren, we have the greatest number of pious souls among the poor. Do look into their poor habitations: they cannot invite you to a dinner or a supper; they have it not in their power; but if you look into their cottage or garret, they will receive you as an angel of God: and, as I hope you wish to do them good, I can assure you that a few words spoken to them personally will do them more good than a hundred pompous and popular harangues. If this method of visiting the poor in their own habitations were more attended unto both by preachers and leaders, it would have a blessed effect, and save many from backsliding, and consequently from eternal destruction. What I recommend to others I try to do myself, and always have satisfaction therein. My day is far spent; and I wish to do all the good I can, so that I may fight the good fight of faith, and finish my course with joy, through my never-failing Redeemer.

Mr. Taylor travelled for twelve years after the above account was published, and at the

Manchester Conference of 1809 was elected President a second time. In 1808 his wife's health was failing; he says: 'I thought the pure air and sweet situation of our house at Wakefield might revive her. Accordingly, at my request, the Conference appointed us thither. I believe I grieved my friends at Bolton in leaving them at the end of one year; but I wished to try anything to restore health to her who had been my travelling companion so many years.' He removed to Manchester in 1810. There his wife died on October 20.

The following sketch of Mr. Taylor appeared in the *Methodist Magazine*, 1816, p. 945:

Died at Birch House, near Bolton, in Lancashire, on Tuesday morning, October 15, 1816, the Rev. Thomas Taylor, aged almost eighty years. From the year 1761, when he was appointed by Mr. Wesley to a circuit, he continued his itinerant labours till the last Conference. Then the pressure of age, with the effects of fifty-five years' hard ministerial labour, obliged this holy, faithful, and resolute minister of Christ to acknowledge that he was no longer able to fill the place of an effective man in the Connexion. But in ceasing to be an itinerant, he remitted no labour to which his strength was adequate; nay, about the close of his eminently useful life, he exerted himself beyond his strength. But his heart and soul were in the work of God; and hence, when labouring under that complaint which terminated

in his death, he would ascend the pulpit to preach 'the unsearchable riches of Christ.'

Having engaged to preach in the Bolton chapels on Sunday, the 13th of October, and the following day, he arrived at the house of his esteemed friend, Roger Holland, Esq., on the preceding Tuesday. The following account of the remaining days of his life is taken from a letter written by Mrs. Holland to his son-in-law, Mr. Robert Miller:

'On Tuesday evening, October 8, Mr. Taylor arrived at Birch House, in his usual state of health and cheerfulness. Wednesday morning he observed that he did not think he had passed so comfortable a night for twelve months. He attended to his studies as usual, and occasionally walked to see a few poor people.

'On Saturday night he had two violent attacks of his complaint, which obliged him to sit up till he was a little recovered; but though he felt himself much enfeebled, he accompanied Mr. Holland to Bolton the next morning, where he preached from "Our light affliction," &c. (2 Cor. iv. 17, 18). It was observed by his hearers that he was particularly animated, and that his views of glory, in the discussion of his subject, were more than usually bright. He dined at Mr. Rothwell's, where he evidenced a spirit of lively gratitude and animated praise. But the effects of his morning exertions soon became so visible in much weakness and bodily pain, that his friends judged it improper for him to undertake the evening service; Mr. Holland, in particular, was very importunate

in dissuading him from the attempt. No entreaties, however, could dissuade him from his purpose of setting out for the old chapel; in going to which he was obliged frequently to pause, and once for the space of nearly a quarter of an hour. Having arrived at the chapel, he went into Mr. Grindrod's, where he remained a short space in order to gain breath; during which time a local preacher began the service. When he had concluded prayer, he found the veteran saint ready to enter upon his office, which he did, by taking these words for his text, "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee." He seemed to have forgotten all his weakness, and to be unusually led out whilst explaining the passage. In one part of the discourse he raised himself, and said with great emphasis, "I should like to die like an old soldier, sword in hand." That night he had another attack in his breast, which painfully interrupted his sleeping, and caused considerable exhaustion the following morning; notwithstanding which, he spent two hours in visiting the sick, but the effort was attended with a great deal of difficulty. He again preached with animation in the evening, from 1 Cor. ii. 12.

'Through the whole of the evening he was particularly cheerful, and often very spiritual. He retired about eleven; and intending to accompany Mr. Holland to Manchester the next morning he shaved before he went to bed. On Tuesday morning Mr. Holland, thinking that he lay longer than usual, as he did not hear him stir, tapped at

his door; but no answer being returned, he entered the room, and found him lying by the bedside at full length, more than half-dressed, but perfectly composed, as in a quiet sleep: the chariots of Israel and the horsemen had come, and the prepared saint had ascended with his bright convoy.'

Throughout the long course of his ministry, so uniform was Mr. Taylor's Christian walk that he never brought the slightest reproach upon his sacred profession. The present race of Methodist preachers know, from experience, little or nothing of the difficulties with which the first race had to contend. Hunger, cold, weariness, bad lodgings, and persecution, in various forms, were their lot; and of each of these Mr. Taylor had his share. Yet he was the same man of God when in London, Manchester, Liverpool, &c., that he had been when subjected to more than ordinary privations.

The diligence which he used for the purpose of improving his mind, that he might be able to feed the people with knowledge and understanding, is highly creditable to his memory as a Christian minister. He drew his divinity from the sacred volume; and such was the estimate which he set upon that pure source of truth, that, in addition to his perusing particular parts of it, upon numberless occasions, there is sufficient ground to believe that he read the whole of it regularly through upwards of fifty times. But his extraordinary attention to the Scriptures

did not make him inattentive to those works with which a minister of Christ ought, if possible, to be acquainted. Hundreds upon hundreds of ancient and modern publications on theology, sacred and profane history, natural and moral philosophy, &c., he read with care and attention.

He was a man of strict order, punctually attending to whatever he took in hand; and perhaps few have ever excelled him in the practice of that very important, but much-neglected duty, the redeeming of time. He was too sensible of its value to waste any part of it in trifling conversation, or mere complimentary visits. His not ordinarily suffering his hours of study to be broken in upon may possibly have induced some to imagine that his prevailing disposition was unsocial, if not morose; but those who knew him well were of a different opinion.

His devoting two hours every day (Sundays and Conference time excepted) to visiting and relieving the poor and afflicted persons, proves that he was a true philanthropist.

To the doctrines and discipline of the Methodists he was a steady and firm adherent; and he manifested, upon all occasions, a sincere and cordial love to the objects of his pastoral care. Meantime he was so far from being a bigot, that he esteemed and loved as brethren all, however opposed to him in matters of opinion, who, he had reason to believe, were true followers of the Lord Jesus.

By continuing to walk humbly and closely with

God, and to be diligent in reading and study, he retained to the last the spirit of preaching, as well as the talents by which he had been enabled so long to feed those of the flock of Christ who sat under his ministry.

Mr. Taylor's views of both the law and the gospel were clear and distinct; and hence, while he maintained that evangelical obedience is not only a fruit of faith, but indispensably necessary in order to its being retained, he did not neglect to inculcate, as a truth of vital importance, that the holiest men on earth are every moment indebted to the merits and mediation of Jesus Christ, for their continuance in a state of acceptance with God. He did not glory in his works; for he well knew that, however sincerely and conscientiously performed, they could not stand the rigour of divine justice; and therefore he availed himself of the covenant of mercy, not that he might sin with impunity, but that, notwithstanding all his defects, of which he had an exquisite and humbling sense, he might still be able to 'worship God in the spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.' Some preachers, by not entertaining similar views, have exhibited the gospel in a mutilated state, and preached it in a dry, cold, and unedifying manner. So did not the venerable Thomas Taylor: hence the divine unction which generally accompanied his sermons.

'Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints,' whether occasioned by the lapse of 'slowly-rolling years,' or an acute or lingering

disease. The time, place, and circumstances of the death of each of them are all under the control and direction of Him who, for the welfare of His people, regulates and overrules every event. Mr. Taylor's death was so sudden that he experienced little or nothing of the formality of dying. His strong and well-formed body was greatly worn by age; but, like a machine well constructed in all its parts, and all those parts so skilfully united as to wear alike, it continued to be a suitable and, upon the whole, a comfortable habitation for his spirit, till at last

The weary springs of life stood still.

Next to Mr. Wesley, he filled the place of an effective man considerably longer than any other Methodist preacher.

His obituary appeared in the Minutes for 1817:

Thomas Taylor, who was brought to the knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus in early life. He commenced his itinerant career in the year 1761; and was a most laborious, faithful, and eminently successful minister of Christ, for the long space of fifty-six years. In the early part of his public life, when Methodism was but in its infancy, he had, together with his contemporaries and fellow labourers in that great work, to endure much from hunger, cold, weariness, and persecution; but he met and surmounted those difficulties with a truly apostolical intrepidity; and, under circumstances which would have overwhelmed a mind of ordinary energies, he pursued,

with indefatigable assiduity, a course of study and labour of uncommon magnitude. Though for many of the first years of his ministry he had to take long and frequent journeys, and to preach a great number of sermons, yet, by habits of early rising, and a diligent improvement of his whole time, he acquired a respectable share of useful literature. To this, however, he conscientiously avoided giving a prominency in his preaching, and made it strictly subordinate and subservient to the doctrines of the gospel. His discourses, which were always short, were chiefly of a practical and experimental character; and to the last he was very fervent and impressive in the pulpit. He was a lover of Christian discipline, as established among the Methodists; and was zealous and firm in its enforcement. As a pastor, he evinced the most commendable diligence, visiting, where it was at all practicable, every part of the flock of Christ under his care; for which purpose he generally set apart two hours in the day: and this practice he continued to the last week of his life. In his family he set the Lord always before him, studying how he might best promote the salvation of his household; and in the worship of the family he was most regular, and delightfully solemn. In the private circle of his friends he was cheerful and improving, knowing well how to combine rational instruction with spiritual edification. His natural temper was independent and irritable; but these imperfections were so habitually under the subduing influence of divine grace, as to be rarely perceptible even to his most

intimate friends; and in the decline of life, he imbibed a heavenly sweetness of spirit which was seldom interrupted. In short, the good degree of learning which he attained, his extensive labours, his unceasing activity in the best of causes, the almost unparalleled length of his course of efficient ministerial duties, and, above all, his close and constant walk with God, and universal devotedness to His glory, placed him in the highest class of the servants of God on earth; and, we have no doubt, he is now found near the throne of Him in whose blood he had washed his robes. His death was sudden, and to his friends unexpected; but, with respect to himself, it was doubtless followed by an abundant entrance into the kingdom of God. He died at Birch House, near Bolton, the residence of his friend Roger Holland, Esq., on October 16, 1816, in the seventy-ninth year of his age; having, only a few hours before his departure, in an animated sermon, set forth the deep things of God.

THE CHRISTIAN SOLDIER'S DEATH.[1]

TO THE MEMORY OF THE REV. THOMAS TAYLOR.

Servant of God! well done,
  Rest from thy loved employ;
The battle's fought, the victory won,
  Enter thy Master's joy;
—The voice at midnight came,
  He started up to hear;
A mortal arrow pierced his frame,
  He fell—but felt no fear.

[1] See Julian's *Dict. of Hymnology*, p. 1053.

At home amidst alarms,
  It found him in the field;
A veteran slumbering on his arms
  Beneath his red-cross shield:
His sword was in his hand,
  Still warm with recent fight;
Ready that moment at command
  Through rock and steel to smite.

It was a two-edged blade,
  Of heavenly temper keen;
And double were the wounds it made
  Where'er it glanced between:
'Twas death to sin—'twas life
  To all that mourn'd their sin;
It kindled and it silenced strife,
  Made war and peace within.

At midnight came the cry,
  'To meet thy God prepare';
He woke—he caught his Captain's eye;
  Then, strong in faith and prayer,
His spirit with a bound
  Burst its encumbering clay,
—His tent at sunrise on the ground
  A darken'd ruin lay.

The pains of death are past,
  Labour and sorrow cease;
And life's long warfare closed at last,
  His soul is found in peace.
—Soldier of Christ, well done!
  Begin thy new employ;
Sing, while eternal ages run,
  Thy Master and His joy.

James Montgomery.

JAMES ROGERS[1]

SINCE I first began to recommend the great love of God in Christ Jesus to others, I have had many solicitations to give some account of His dealings with my own soul; yet I never could prevail on myself to attempt it till now. But having kept no journal, it cannot be expected that the following pages should contain anything more than a recital of a few particular circumstances which made the deepest impression upon my memory at the time they occurred. If these, or any of them, are made a blessing to my friends, let them give God the glory.

I was born in the North Riding of Yorkshire, in a large village, called Marske, in February, 1749. I was put to school early, and taught to read the Scriptures from a child; in some parts of which I found singular delight.

The Spirit of God began to strive with me when I was about three or four years old. On hearing a passing-bell, or seeing a corpse, I was very thoughtful, and would often ask my parents pertinent questions about a future state. On seeing lightning, or hearing a loud clap of thunder, my fears were usually alarmed to a high degree; and the more so as an impression always followed me that it was God speaking from the clouds; and as I greatly expected, at these times, that He

[1] From the *Arminian Magazine*, 1789, p. 346.

was just descending to judge the world, I would run to the door to see Him come! Such ideas as these were much increased and confirmed by several dreams, which I had from my infancy, about death, judgement, heaven, and hell.

When I was about ten years of age, I dreamed one night I saw fire bursting out of the earth in several parts; that it raged so furiously, and spread with such rapidity, that in a few seconds the whole globe was but one blaze! I thought I saw all the inhabitants of the place where I lived struck with inexpressible consternation and horror; and especially the bad people, as I called them, whom I had known to curse and swear, and get drunk; with many of my playfellows, who were accustomed to lie, and cheat, and play on the Sabbath: these I thought set up such dreadful shrieks and yells as were enough to pierce a heart of stone. As I looked up, the face of the sky seemed totally overspread with blackness. Instantly the forked lightnings began to play, till the heavens were all in one glare, and such loud peals of thunder followed as I had never heard. The sun I could see no more; but I thought I got a transient sight of the moon, which appeared larger than ever I had seen it before, and as red as a huge mass of blood. The heavens seemed all in motion, and were exceedingly agitated; they appeared to work, and heave, and rock from side to side, till not one star was left remaining: thus was the scripture fulfilled, 'And the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig-tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken

of a mighty wind.' The sky seemed next to pass away, or, as I remember to have read, 'to be wrapped together as a scroll.' My favourite passage (Dan. vii. 9, 10) I now saw fulfilled.

The thoughts I had about the deplorable state of my guilty neighbours now seemed swallowed up in a most painful anxiety for my own safety. I was waiting in expectation of a summons to the bar; but, deeply conscious that I was unprepared, was alarmed to such a degree that I awoke.

After recollecting myself a little, and finding I was still an inhabitant of this world, my joy was inexpressible! Nevertheless, it had a most solemn effect upon my mind, and the impression remained for many weeks. How true are those words in Job xxxiii.: 'God speaketh once, yea twice, yet man perceiveth it not. In a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falleth upon men, in slumberings upon the bed; then He openeth the ears of men, and sealeth their instruction.' From this time I began to feel great desires to be taught how I might obtain a preparation to meet my Judge with comfort.

On the winter evenings several neighbours frequently came to sit and spend an hour in friendly conversation with my father, and oftentimes upon religious subjects, according to their light. To these I was very attentive; and when my hour for bed came, I would beg hard to sit a little longer, though I had not courage to urge the chief reason which induced me, namely, a desire to hear what might be said upon these subjects.

I remember one night in particular, many queries were proposed about salvation: none of them thought it possible that any certainty could be attained in this life whether they should be saved at last or not. But the general opinion was that our actions would all be weighed in the day of judgement; and if our good deeds overbalanced our bad ones, we should go to heaven; but if the contrary, we should go to hell. But some dissented a little from this, and thought, Nay, but God was merciful, and had sent His Son to die for sinners; and that their best way would be to amend their lives, and do all they could, and Christ would make up the rest. One of these they all agreed must be the way; and, to confirm them in this conclusion, one observed that the parson of the parish was exactly of the same mind.

I endeavoured to satisfy myself with these determinations, but I could not. It was all, alas! left at uncertainty; and this would not do for one that was daily expecting a call to appear before the Judge of quick and dead.

However, I thought no way so likely to succeed as to say my prayers regularly morning and evening, and be as careful as possible in refraining from bad words, especially from telling lies, playing on the Sabbath-day, neglecting my book, quarrelling with my schoolfellows, doing anything I was taught to believe was wrong, or keeping company with such wicked boys as led me into the way of such temptations.

At eleven years of age I was called to bear a severe trial by the death of one of the tenderest

and best of fathers. He had been subject for many years to what we call the heart-colic, and was often apparently near death. At such times, when every other hope seemed to fail, I used to get into a corner, fall down upon my knees, and there pray and weep, and wrestle with God to spare his life: and though I knew not the Lord, yet I often felt a confidence that He heard me, and would grant my request; and when I found it so, such gratitude and uncommon sweetness would rest upon my mind for many days as is better felt than expressed. However, he died at last of that disorder, after a few days' illness.

For some time I was quite inconsolable; and had I been possessed of the whole world, I would gladly have given it all to have died with him, if I had been prepared. But as I knew I was not, I earnestly begged of my eldest brother (then upwards of twenty) to tell me what I must do to be saved; believing as soon as I was ready for heaven, God would certainly take me, which was all that I wished for. But alas! I gained no ground, for want (I believe) of proper instruction; for as yet the light of the glorious gospel had not shined in that neighbourhood.

My father leaving no will, and his little property consisting chiefly of land, it fell of course to my eldest brother; so that the family soon after became dispersed. I was removed to some distance among strangers; but I found favour in their sight, and was suffered to want for nothing. Here I got a new set of acquaintance, but equally destitute of the knowledge of God.

It pleased Him, however, whose ways are in the mighty waters, and His judgements in the great deep, to find means to teach me the knowledge of His salvation.

A wild young man, a few doors from where I lived, contrary to the will of his parents, and against the advice of all his friends, would go to sea; but he had not been there long before he was heartily weary, and ran away from his master. He was ashamed, however, to return home, and equally afraid of being known, as it was in the height of the French war, when the press was very hot. He therefore set out for some inland town, and took up his residence for some months in Northampton. Here the poor prodigal had time for reflection, and began to think on the mercies he had slighted in his father's house. By this strange chain of providences it was that he became acquainted with the Methodists, a small body of whom were in this place. He was invited by them, and afterwards went constantly to the preaching. His conscience being very soon thoroughly awakened, he readily joined their little society, and became a steady member.

After several months, he took courage, and wrote home to his friends. His father, always tender over him, was filled with joy to hear of his long-lost son; and went to the captain he had sailed with, got the indenture at a considerable expense, and the matter was made up; which happy circumstance no sooner reached the young man than he set off, and returned to his father's house with a glad heart.

His old acquaintance flocked to see him upon his arrival, and expected feasting, merriment, and, as they call it, great doings. But the tables were now turned. He began to exhort us all to 'flee from the wrath to come'; enforcing the necessity of repentance and the new birth, stating that old things must be done away, and all things become new; and he observed that, instead of gluttony, drinking, singing, and dancing, we ought rather to fall upon our knees, and give God thanks for all His benefits.

His former companions gaped and stared at him as a monster; and some of them came near him no more, swearing he was turned Methodist, that his brain was hurt, and that, if they did not keep from him, he would convert them all, and make them as mad as himself. But these things had a very different effect upon me; I looked upon him as some angelic being dropped from the clouds, and was affected in an extraordinary manner while he was speaking to the rest; but as he took no notice of me, I concluded I was too vile for such a favourite of heaven to stoop to. I went away trembling and speechless, seeking a place to vent my grief in: but it enhanced my misery when I found that I could not weep; for my heart seemed as black as hell, and as hard as a stone. I prayed again and again; but, as I thought, to little purpose. However, I was clearly convinced that this was the way, and there was no other; but then I thought it was impossible I should ever feel the happiness which that young man experienced unless I could go to those

people, and to that place where he found so blessed a change. I inquired what distance Northampton was, thinking to set out unknown to any one, having a degree of confidence that God would take care of me; but finding it was near two hundred miles, and not knowing one foot of the road, and being not yet fourteen years of age, I was quite discouraged; and, being no longer able to contain my sorrow, I begged one of the family with whom I resided to intercede for me with the young man that he would only speak to me; thinking that if he would take notice of such an unworthy creature, I should be one of the happiest of mortals. To my great surprise, he not only embraced the first opportunity of speaking to me, but seemed to rejoice over me as one that had found great spoil. This brought to my mind that scripture, 'There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.' And as it is with them, so I proved it to be with His people here.

From that time I date my acquaintance with the people of God, and to this day I have preferred them to all others. With what gratitude and delight have I often reflected upon and repeated those lines,

What a mercy is this,
What a heaven of bliss,
How unspeakably happy am I!
Gathered into the fold,
With Thy people enrolled,
With Thy people to live and to die!

The first society I had intimacy with was in Guisborough, a small market-town in the north of Yorkshire, and about eight miles distant from where I lived. This was the nearest place where there was preaching; and the road to it was not very good, as it lay over some mountains, and through several lonely woods, which were rendered more so on very dark winter evenings. But my need was such that I never thought a moment on these discouragements. Sometimes I had company; at other times I had none: but I do not remember that (when business would permit) I ever neglected to go regularly once a fortnight, on (I think) the Tuesday evenings; and this was all the preaching we then had.

Some time after this, two or three of us began to think, if possible, of getting the preaching at the village where I lived. We spoke to the preachers, who appeared very willing to make a trial, and accordingly visited us occasionally a few times. The word was attended with power, and they soon joined about fifteen of us in a class, and afterwards took us into their Plan. We now thought ourselves highly honoured indeed. Our little number increased to about twenty; and then the enemy, who had hitherto been pretty quiet, began to show himself. His chief attack was upon the few united together to 'work out their own salvation with fear and trembling.' Against these he roared horribly. At our preachings and public meetings the sons of Belial would assemble in a most shameless and tumultuous manner; but they were never permitted to hurt

any one, although they spoke many great and swelling words.

Once while one of our friends was at prayer, and I and a few more were kneeling by him, a stout old woman, with vengeance in her countenance, advanced, having a sharp broad axe (such as carpenters hew wood with), with many dreadful imprecations against the Methodists. She cursed horribly, and swore she would be the death of some one, if she was hanged for it the next hour. She stood a few seconds with her arms extended; no one offered to oppose her, but we prayed the more fervently, till, just as she appeared to be making a blow at the young man's head then at prayer, the axe fell to the floor, as if the use of her hands was perfectly taken away, and she retired as fast as she could into another room, still cursing the youth for being the ruin of her son and daughter; as she was sure those 'false prophets' would never have come there but for him; and she did not know where it would stop, but was sure the devil would get them all. She used many such like expressions. Not long after this she was called to give up her accounts to God.

But these persecutions because of the word proved a sifting time; and many who countenanced the preaching at first, appeared by-and-by to have been mere 'stony-ground hearers.' Nay, even our own society was soon diminished to about twelve. These held out for a few months, till the leader and his wife, with the man also who took in the preachers, were taken to

Abraham's bosom. The death of these three in so short a time as a few months was an awful visitation. Those of us that remained proving unfaithful, the candlestick was very soon after removed to another place. Two or three of us followed it, and continued for a little time; but by-and-by our love also waxed cold.

Though I was now about fifteen years of age, I had never been able to say that my sins were forgiven. Nevertheless, my desires were strong, and often did the Lord give me a foretaste of His love; but, having no one near to speak to, the adversary gained an advantage over me. I gave way by little and little; and my old companions, soon observing me less grave and circumspect, began to solicit me to join with them as formerly. This I refused for a time, but not with the resolution and steadfastness I had done before; so that they were encouraged to use other means of gaining me over. With what shame and sorrow of heart do I still reflect that in a little time I joined them in parties of pleasure, and went from bad to worse, till I became tenfold more a child of hell than ever! For, having once given way, my conscience became my constant tormentor day and night. I compared myself to that unhappy spirit who, being cast out of his habitation, went about seeking rest, but found none. Thus I continued for upwards of two years, running as if in haste for damnation, with a lighted candle in my hand; striving to stifle conscience with repeated acts of disobedience. The Spirit of God seemed for a time as if He had given me up,

till I left the place I now had lived at upwards of five years, and removed to another village called Newton-under-Ousbury, where was a small society of sincere Christians, with monthly preaching, a public meeting, and a class on the Lord's day. Here the Lord began to strive with me again; but I fought against Him, and still grieved His Holy Spirit.

I removed from thence to Stockton-upon-Tees. Upon my arrival here I began to reflect upon my folly; conscience was awakened once more, and I obeyed its dictates so far as to join the society. But seeing my class-leader intoxicated with liquor, I was offended, and went near him no more.

After spending near one year in this place, I removed to Whitby in the year 1768, where was a large and flourishing society. I felt very unsettled and unhappy, till at last I resolved, God being my helper, to join that loving people. But then I thought I was too vile, and was greatly discouraged by reflecting on my repeated backslidings for upwards of four years. I doubted whether I should ever stand long. However, my convictions increased, so that I could take no rest day or night, till I sent for that pious man, William Ripley.[1] I expected that he would upbraid me with my past ingratitude to God and His people; but he said not a word of this kind. No! he saw me labouring under the weight of a wounded spirit, and the comfort he

[1] 'He was a burning and a shining light,' says Wesley (*Journal*, June 13, 1786). See Wesley Historical Society's *Proceedings*, vol. vi. p. 37.

administered to me at that time was a cordial to my soul. Without asking me any questions, he fell upon his knees to write a note admitting me into the society, which I received with a trembling hand, fearing that my poor unfaithful heart would again start aside as a broken bow. But, glory be to God, He was better to me than all my fears. In five days He blessed me with what I never knew before; namely, a clear sense of pardon. This was on February 6, 1769, about ten o'clock in the evening. I believe that I might have received this years before, when under those first awakenings of the Spirit of God, had I fallen into the same hands; but the people I was first connected with, though very serious and devout, were less evangelical in their sentiments. I had still retained a notion that my repentance was not sufficient; that I must be much more in earnest, feel more terror, more sorrow, deeper convictions, &c., before I could possibly attain a sense of pardon. This my friends in Whitby soon discerned, and told me, if God saw it necessary, He would deepen my convictions; but for me to pray for this, and to wait a little and a little longer, before I would dare to look for His favour, was the ready way to lose even the distress I then felt. They therefore told me that I must pray for nothing but a sense of the favour of God. Two of them one night vehemently urged me to embrace the promises by faith; assured me that all things were ready; and insisted that I must that very night believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and I should certainly be saved. At first I

thought them so wild in their notions, and withal so unreasonable in their demands, that I could scarcely refrain from being angry. My carnal nature spurned at it, because I thought it as impossible for me to believe as to pull the sun from the firmament. However, when they had talked to me thus for nearly two hours, I was exceedingly affected; and, trembling between hope and fear, I begged, in a degree of agony, that they would pray for me. Accordingly, we all fell on our knees. That zealous man of God, John Rogers, prayed first; and at every word he uttered my heart felt, and I firmly believed that God would grant him his heart's desire. In that solemn moment, all the sufferings of Christ came to my mind. By the eye of faith I had as real a view of His agony on Calvary as ever I had of any object by the eye of sense. I saw His hands and His feet nailed to the cross; His head crowned with thorns; and His side pierced with the soldier's spear; with innumerable drops of blood falling from different parts of His body, and His face all covered therewith. But oh what a look was that! Such an inexpressible degree of approbation was communicated to my soul thereby as I shall never forget. While I now recollect it, my overflowing heart and eyes almost forbid my proceeding. In that moment my burden was gone; my heart was brought out of bondage into glorious liberty; and the love which I felt for God and all mankind was inexpressibly great. I was constrained to cry, with David, 'Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will

declare what He hath done for my soul.' I seemed as if I had never known happiness till now, and could hardly think it possible that I should learn war any more.

I now went about among my old acquaintance, with a confidence that they would all repent and be converted if they knew how ready Christ was to save them. Some I found willing to hear what I had to say; others stared at me as one quite out of my senses. However, as nothing discouraged me, if I found them unwilling to let me pray with them, I used to fall on my knees in the midst of the floor, and praise God for what He had done for me, and pray that He would let them see their wants, and give them all to experience the same blessing which I enjoyed. It pleased God to work powerfully at that time, especially among the young people, many of whom came from a considerable distance to hear the word. I and some others had great delight in accompanying them on their way home. Nor can I reflect on those seasons without singular pleasure, when we sang the praises of God as we walked along, and when we kneeled down in the fields, or on the sea-shore, and commended each other to the grace of God. This was in the twentieth year of my age.

About this time the Lord raised up several witnesses of entire sanctification, whose daily walk and conversation did honour to their profession. With some of these I often conversed, and they would frequently speak of the blessedness of this salvation from inbred sin. I did not

fully understand them at first, but thought I was as happy as I could be; nor did I know that I wanted anything which I had not received. However, not many days after this, being closely tempted, I was convinced that, though the guilt of sin was all done away, yet there were in me the remains of an evil nature; that, though I was happy in a sense of acceptance, and had power also over inward and outward sin, yet the fountain of corruption was not dried up; that I had yet a degree of the carnal mind, which is enmity against God. And had I not been told that this is consistent with a state of justification, it is probable I should have cast away my confidence, as the enemy strongly suggested that my experience was all a delusion. The attack was severe while it lasted, for I reasoned with the temptation till my soul was in an agony; but in my distress I cried unto the Lord, and He graciously heard me, and delivered me out of all my fears; so that my evidence of pardon was more distinct and clear than ever. And as I believed the report, and cordially received the testimony of the happy few who professed entire sanctification, I felt strong desires awakened in my soul for that inestimable blessing; and being daily urged by some of these to press after it, and to expect it every moment by faith alone, in a little time my thirst was such that I could not rest, whatever place or company I was in.

In reading the Scriptures I was more and more enlightened to see, and encouraged to hope for, deliverance from the root of sin. I saw there were

given unto me exceeding great and precious promises that I should be made a partaker of the divine nature; and that the great end for which our Lord was manifested in the flesh was 'to destroy the works of the devil, to make an end of sin, and to bring in everlasting righteousness.' And I farther perceived that not only the promise of God, but His oath also, was given of old to His covenant people, 'that they should be delivered out of the hands of their enemies, that they might serve Him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before Him all the days of their life.'

From the manner in which this subject is introduced in the New Testament, I was led to infer two things. First, that the enemies there meant were our sins, especially the evils of our own heart. And, secondly, that the design of God is not to defer the destruction of these till death, or even to some little time before it, but that 'now is the accepted time'; for He here declares His will is that we should serve Him all the remaining part of our life in holiness, and without fear; which St. John, in his first Epistle, iv. 18, says we cannot do until we are made first perfect in love.

Indeed, the whole Bible seemed calculated to raise my expectation of an answer to that prayer: 'Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.' And the more I contrasted the spirituality of the law with my own corrupt nature, the more eager were my desires.

At last I resolved neither to eat nor sleep till my

desire was accomplished. I had no sooner made that resolution than I was tempted to reason upon the rashness of it. But such was the condescension of God that He indulged my importunity, and granted my request. I went with a trembling heart to the very house where it had pleased Him to shed abroad His pardoning love in my soul. That pious family no sooner learned my errand than they encouraged me to expect the blessing that hour; and exhorted me to believe on the Lord Jesus for full salvation. We then fell on our knees; and a good woman, one Mary Best, full of faith and love, wrestled and pleaded with the Lord for me. In less than fifteen minutes my burden was removed, and I felt an entire change, accompanied with a peculiar humbling sweetness; but not that rapturous joy I always thought attended that perfect liberty. On this account I was tempted much to reason; and it is probable the enemy would have wrested away my shield but for the comforting interposition of my friends, who were not, like me, ignorant of Satan's devices. They told me it was a common case that a soul might be emptied of sin, and yet not filled with love till afterwards; that the blessing of Christian perfection consisted in feeling I am nothing, and Christ is all in all. This I found true by experience, and therefore I was enabled henceforth to rejoice in a full assurance of this great salvation. In this glorious liberty I walked for at least three months; during which time, notwithstanding many fiery darts were shot at me, I could sing,

Not a cloud doth arise,
To darken the skies,
Or hide for a moment my Lord from my eyes.

When I looked for those inward risings of anger, pride, and self-will, which, like dry tinder, were formerly ready to catch fire at any provocation, I found them not; but, on the contrary, I found meekness, humility, and resignation. I was so truly humbled with a sense of my own nothingness that I rejoiced to suffer reproach for the name of Christ. That natural enmity to the pure law of God being now totally removed, His commandments became more joyous than ever; and I could say, in a sense that I never could before, 'The law of God is in my heart, even the law of love.' I felt it the constraining principle which led me to do and suffer the whole will of God. But, at the same time, I felt my ignorance and helplessness, together with the weakness and unworthiness which attended my best services: hence my daily cry was,

Every moment, Lord, I want
The merit of Thy death.

And, blessed be God! I felt it applied. Through faith in His blood I had constant access to the Father, through the Spirit; yea, and had fellowship with the Father and the Son by the Holy Ghost.

My love to God was accompanied with fervent desires for the salvation of immortal souls, and a conviction that I was called of God to preach the

gospel. I thought if I could explain to others what I then felt, they would all repent and be converted. I was at this time at a considerable distance from my relations; and, as my first care was for their salvation, I could not rest till I reached my native place, being fully persuaded that I had a message from God unto them. I got a considerable number of my friends together; and, standing up for the first time in my father's house, faithfully warned them to flee from the wrath to come. All seemed astonished, and some were much affected. But, alas! it was not as I expected. I did not find it such an easy matter to convert them from the error of their way as I imagined. I plainly saw this power belongeth unto God alone. However, it pleased Him to give me some encouragement. For the second time I met them, while at the last prayer, the house was filled with groans and cries, till at length one exclaimed (namely, my sister-in-law), 'Glory be to God! Glory be to God! He hath blessed me! He hath set my soul at liberty! I can praise Him, and I will praise Him! Oh praise God for me! Praise Him! Praise Him! Let everything that hath breath praise the Lord!' And so she went on for a considerable time.

This greatly encouraged me. But Satan seemed very unwilling that I should proceed, and therefore endeavoured to throw hindrances in my way. I then removed from the family I had been so much blessed with to another, who, though they had much longer professed religion, yet were less alive to God. Here I fell into a snare, which

brought my soul into great heaviness; for, parleying with temptation, I lost my confidence, and became almost distracted for a season.

About this time I had the following dream. I thought I was bitten by a large serpent; that I received a wound which I knew to be very dangerous; and that unavoidable death would ensue, if a speedy cure could not be effected. But where to go for it, I knew not. My hand was presently swelled to a prodigious size, and the poison seemed to spread very swiftly through my whole body. Observing this, I was in an agony of distress, when one told me of a physician at some distance who alone could cure the bite of that serpent. On this, I determined to go to him immediately; but when I got to the door, I saw an innumerable multitude of serpents, through the midst of which I must pass. My torture and perplexity being inexpressible, I turned into the house again. But reflecting that if I stayed here, death was the certain consequence, and that I could but die if I went; and considering farther that if the physician could cure the first wound, he could also cure the rest, I resolved to push through them at all hazards, and so ran with all my might. I thought I got many bites more; yet none so bad as the first. At last, coming to the physician, he received me with kindness, and applied a balmy medicine, which immediately relieved my pain, and removed the inflammation. Yet still my distress was great, and I told him, 'I dare not return back again; for the numerous serpents I have just passed through will again assault and

wound me.' But he bade me be of good courage, and anointed my whole body with the same balmy medicine, and said it would hinder them from wounding me, though they might assault me; but if they should wound me, he bade me return to him again. On this I thanked him, and with a grateful heart took my leave. When I came towards the serpents, I saw them with joy and surprise sunk back into holes in the earth, and only their heads peeping out, except a few who assaulted me, but had no power to hurt me. So I got safe to my mother's house.

By this dream I was persuaded that I ought to leave that family, and therefore resolved to do it without delay. I had no sooner fixed this determination than a glimpse of hope was darted into my soul, and I saw that Jesus was the physician. Believing that He was both able and willing to heal my wound, I retired (as was my daily custom at that hour) to read and pray; when the Lord, instead of upbraiding me, applied the precious balm of His blood, and restored the joy of His salvation to my distressed soul. Taking my Bible, and lifting up my heart to heaven, I opened on the seventh chapter of St. John; and coming to that passage, 'Jesus stood up in that great day of the feast, and cried, If any man thirst, let him come unto Me, and drink,' I shall never forget the manner in which these words were applied to my soul. It was as if the Lord Jesus Christ was standing before me in person, and actually speaking these words to me. If He had, it was not possible my assurance could

have been greater that all my backslidings were healed.

I now left Whitby, and went to reside about five miles distant. Here Providence cast my lot with a most agreeable and happy family, and the Lord confirmed what He had wrought. The holy flame was such in my heart that I went to the neighbouring villages, and, especially every Lord's day, stood in the open streets to warn sinners to flee from the wrath to come. I met with some discouragements, especially from old dry professors, who concluded I ran too fast to run long; but in less than six months it pleased God to raise a society in Lythe, a village about a mile distant. We procured a comfortable place to preach in, and the Lord added daily to our number. We then solicited the travelling preachers to visit us, and soon after they gave us one night in a month.

The enemy had often strove to prevent the gospel from taking root in that wicked place; but now, seeing the word mightily prevail, notwithstanding all his stratagems, he raged with redoubled fury. Some ruffians combined to prevent my preaching; and were determined, some way or other, to carry their point. As I was not afraid of man, and the few whom God had raised up were resolved to stand by me, we regarded not their threats.

After they had often disturbed us in our preaching-house, one night these sons of Belial collected all their forces, and assembled at the door to attack us as we came out. Their number

was great, and I had no sooner dismissed the people than they began the assault. Hearing this, I pushed forward from the pulpit, and got into the midst of them. They saluted me with volleys of oaths, and showers of stones and dirt, and in less than two minutes fell to blows. One of the stoutest of them advanced, with eyes full of fury, and made several strokes at my head; but I received them upon my left arm, which, by this means, was much bruised. When he could not bring me to the ground, he was enraged; and, watching his opportunity, whilst I endeavoured to rescue one of my friends whom they were beating, he came behind, and gave me such a blow on my right temple that I staggered like a drunken man. My hat fell off, and my senses were greatly confused; so that I must have fallen, had he followed his blow. This doubtless he would have done; but in that moment a young girl, who had lately been awakened and had joined our society, thinking I was much hurt, instantly took up a stone, about two pounds weight, and threw it at his back. He then left me, to revenge himself upon her; and indeed she suffered dreadfully: for he took up a stone, equally large, and threw it with such violence in her face that she fell to the ground, and lay motionless. She was supposed to be dead, and was carried home to her mother's house. However, it pleased God that she recovered; yet she was cut in the most dreadful manner, having her cheek laid open to the bone; and she will bear this mark of suffering for her Lord's sake to her dying hour. Others of our

friends were hurt. One, in particular, had his face almost covered with blood; and his coat, waistcoat, and shirt torn halfway down his back. It is probable we might have come worse off still had not God taken our part; for, 'as the stars in their courses fought against Sisera,' so the Lord struck our enemies with terror, by sending, in that very moment, dreadful flashes of lightning from a cloud, which seemed to burst over their guilty heads. Finding an opportunity, while they were terrified, we endeavoured to escape; but retreated gradually, as some of our people were old and infirm, and we were not willing to leave them in the rear, lest they should become a prey The next day we found means to bring some of the ringleaders to justice, and they disturbed us no more.

Having spent almost two years among these my first children in the gospel, though I loved them as my own soul, I was not easy in my mind to be shut up in one place, and that a small one. I therefore set out on foot upon a journey of about one hundred miles in circumference, preaching wherever I found a door open.

In this journey I met with some difficulties; nevertheless my encouragements more than counter-balanced them. Among several others, one thing was as pleasing as remarkable. An old man came to hear preaching at Wingate, a small village near Sunderland, and was deeply convinced of sin. He went home with trembling and terror, and could not sleep till he had found a clear sense of pardon. Being filled with joy

unspeakable, he communicated this to his wife, with whom he had lived upwards of fifty years. She was exceedingly affected with the relation of what God had wrought in him; and wished to go the next evening with him, and hear for herself. When she came and heard, she was deeply convinced; and returning home, she asked her husband if he thought God would give her the same blessing which he had obtained. The old man, full of faith, cried, 'Oh yes! all things are ready. You may have it this night: He hath saved me, who am the greatest sinner.' Being encouraged at this, they agreed to pray together alternately, confident that God would bless her also, even that very night. They continued wrestling, Jacob-like, till after four in the morning, and had no answer. Though their strength was much exhausted with praying so long, being both upwards of fourscore years of age, and consequently very infirm, yet they would not give up; and the Lord soon after condescended to grant her request, and to speak her sins forgiven. What a fulfilment of that promise, 'If two of you shall agree on earth touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them!' And what encouragement for poor sinners of every age, that these two, even at the eleventh hour, were not rejected by the Lord of the harvest!

This journey being in the depth of winter, the weather severe, and some of my lodgings not very comfortable, was the cause of a long and dangerous illness, the relics of which settled in my left hand, which gathered and broke in several

places. The whole habit of my body was brought so low that I was thought by most who saw me to be in a deep consumption; indeed I fully expected that I should not recover, and was greatly rejoiced at the prospect of being so soon with Him whom my soul loved. Nevertheless, for His sake I was willing to live, if thereby I might bring glory to His name.

I continued in this weak state of body for upwards of two years. Yet I laboured as much as my health would permit for some months on the Hull Circuit. In the year 1772, one of the preachers[1] appointed for York going to America, Mr. Wesley wrote to me to take his place; which I did. And I continued on that circuit until my strength was so exhausted that I could travel no longer. I was then advised by Mr. Bruce, a medical gentleman in York, to use the cold bath. And in preference to all others he recommended Ilkley Wells, a place near Otley, in the West Riding of Yorkshire. Before I had been there a week, I felt the good effects of it; and I am fully persuaded that, under God, that water was the means of saving my life. After using it constantly for about three months, in October, 1773, I went to Thirsk, and at the request of many kind friends spent my winter there; where I employed the little strength God had graciously restored to me, and, I trust, not without some fruit of my labour.

In May, 1774, although I had no relapse in my disorder, it was thought advisable that I should

[1] Thomas Rankin.

return to Ilkley Wells for a while to confirm my cure. I did so, and continued in that neighbourhood till August. I now thought myself able to take a circuit again, and therefore at the Bristol Conference that year I was appointed to labour with Mr. Duncan Wright, at Thirsk. I was truly thankful for such a fellow labourer; for he acted the part of a father to me. We had the hearts of the people, and the Lord added many seals to our ministry.

In the year 1775 I was received into full connexion, and appointed at the Leeds Conference for Edinburgh; where I had for my colleagues T[homas] R[utherford] and R[obert] W[ilkinson], two faithful men, whose hearts were in the work. The people soliciting our stay another year, Mr. Rutherford and I were permitted to remain; and Mr. M'Nab was appointed with us. But though we laboured in love and harmony both with each other and among the people, yet very little fruit appeared at the end of two years. We had found two hundred and sixty members in the Edinburgh Circuit; we joined upwards of two hundred more, and yet in the end, left only two hundred and forty-five; that is, fifteen less than we found. So fluctuating was that people! Nevertheless, we have a few steady, faithful, hospitable friends in Scotland.

I should probably have stayed longer in that kingdom had my health permitted. What injured my constitution a second time was a journey which I took to the Isle of Bute. It is eighteen miles long, and in most parts about three

or four broad; situate about forty miles from Glasgow; its inhabitants in general speak the Erse language; few understand English. Being invited by one of the natives, a well-wisher to religion, I was resolved to give them a trial. We had about twenty miles to go by water; and in the second voyage I made, just after we put to sea, a dreadful storm arose. The boatmen were so foolhardy as not to put back again; and, the wind being nearly right ahead of our vessel, they were obliged to tack most of the way. The women passengers and the children began to shriek and cry dreadfully, so that the sailors were obliged to put them all below, and to fasten down the hatches. The place was small, and the people so numerous that I expected they would be suffocated; but there was no alternative. The rest drank so much whisky that I feared there would not be men enough sober to work the vessel. They pressed me to partake with them; but I could not taste. No, I had other work; looking every moment when the vessel would fill, and overset, as part of it was an open boat. The rain and hail were very heavy from the clouds; and the sea also breaking over us, I had nothing left dry about me. Thus I sat, or stood, without any shelter, for twelve or fourteen hours, exposed to the whole, whilst the water ran out of my shoes. But, contrary to our fears, it pleased God at last to bring us safe to the haven where we would be.

Having no clothes to shift me, I went straight to the inn where I had slept before; intending to go immediately to bed, as my only resource,

to prevent a fit of sickness; but, to my great disappointment, a gentleman's family, who had been detained by the same storm, had possession of my lodgings. In about two hours, an old man, hearing of my situation, came and gave me a kind invitation to his little cottage. I gladly accepted his friendly offer; and hastening home with him, put off my wet clothes; but my bed being raised only about twelve inches from a damp earthen floor, and there being no fire, it was not quite so comfortable as my condition then required, especially as the coverings were not warm, being nearly worn out. The consequence was, in a few hours I found my throat exceedingly inflamed, and a burning feverish heat through my whole frame; so that I had little hope of ever seeing the mainland again. It was also impracticable to send for any of my friends, because of the weather; yet, blessed be God, I was not friendless; for that Friend that sticketh closer than a brother did not leave me, neither forsake me. He who filleth the vast immensity of space with His presence can never be distant from those who hope in His mercy; nor can He fail to deliver them in the time of need. I have reason to speak thus; for such was His goodness that, without any human assistance, use of medicine, or any comforting cordial (save that of the love of Christ), in a few days I was able to go out again. But I was then hard put to it for food; and, having nothing that I could relish, I employed a poor woman to gather me a kind of shell-fish, about half the size of cockles, which was my chief

support till I was able to return to the mainland. After this I remained some months in Glasgow and Edinburgh; but did not recover my health for a long time.

In the year 1777 I was appointed to labour in the east of Cornwall. A journey of about five hundred miles was no small fatigue in my then weak state of body; but the Lord was with me. I looked upon it as His doing; therefore set out in His name, and found sweet communion with Him in the way.

I had long desired to converse with that great and good man, Mr. Fletcher; and now an opportunity offered itself. Stopping at Bristol for a few days to rest myself and horse, I heard of his being at Mr. Ireland's, about three miles off, in a poor state of health, and with two of my brethren took a ride to see him. When we came there he was returning from a ride, which he was advised by his physician to take every day. Dismounting from his horse, he came towards us with arms spread open, and eyes lifted up to heaven. His apostolic appearance, with the whole of his deportment, amazingly affected us.

The first words he spoke, while yet standing in the stable by his horse, were a part of the sixteenth chapter of St. John, most of which he repeated. And whilst he pointed out the descent of the Holy Ghost, as the great promise of the Father, and the privilege of all New Testament believers, in a manner I never had heard before, my soul was dissolved into tenderness, and became even as melting wax before the fire.

As an invidious report had been spread that he had recanted what he had lately written against Calvinism, in those excellent writings of his, entitled his *Checks*, &c., I took the liberty to mention the report, and asked him what he thought had given rise to it. He replied he could not tell, except that he had refrained from speaking on controverted points since he came to Mr. Ireland's; partly by reason of the poor state of his health, and because he did not wish to grieve his kind friend by making his house a field of controversy; but assured us he had never yet seen cause to repent of what he had written in defence of the Rev. Mr. Wesley's *Minutes*. And though he believed his close application was the means of reducing his body to the state in which we then saw it, yet if he fell a victim, it was in a good cause.

After a little farther conversation upon the universal love of God in Christ Jesus, we were about to take our leave, when Mr. Ireland sent his footman into the yard with a bottle of red wine, and some slices of bread upon a waiter. We all uncovered our heads while Mr. Fletcher craved a blessing upon the same; which he had no sooner done than he handed first the bread to each, and then, lifting up his eyes to heaven, pronounced those words: 'The body of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was given for thee, preserve thy body and soul unto everlasting life.' Afterwards, handing the wine, he repeated in like manner: 'The blood of our Lord Jesus Christ,' &c. But such a sacrament I never had before. A sense of

the divine presence rested upon us all; and we were melted into floods of tears. His worthy friend, Mr. Ireland, grieved to see him exhaust his little strength by so much speaking, took him by the arm, and almost forced him into the house; while he kept looking wishfully, and speaking to us, as long as we could see him. We then mounted our horses, and rode away. That very hour more than repaid me for my whole journey from Edinburgh to Cornwall.

When I came to Plymouth Dock I found a lively and loving society. My heart clave to them. My fellow labourers and I had a very agreeable year together upon that circuit, and some good was done. My health also was much restored.

In 1778 I was appointed to labour in Kent. It was the first year of the grand encampment upon Cox Heath; which consisted of about fifteen thousand men. Being only at the distance of half a mile from the Heath, for two or three weeks before I entered upon my circuit, I generally preached in the camp once a day. I have reason to believe some of the seed then sown was not lost, having since met with persons both in England and Ireland who testified they had cause to thank God for the few opportunities they then enjoyed. How often is that word fulfilled, 'Cast thy bread upon the waters, and thou shalt find it after many days!'

On December 4 I was married to Miss Martha Knowlden, a young woman of a worthy family in Loose, near Maidstone, with whom, by a wonderful

chain of providences, I became acquainted about three years before at Edinburgh. She was brought up a Dissenter, and feared the Lord from her infancy; and was often comforted and sweetly drawn by the love of God into a patient waiting for Christ. But she never had a clear sense of pardon till some time after she joined the Methodist society. About four years after she found peace with God, and near one year after our marriage she became more acquainted with the deep things of God than before: inbred sin was removed by sanctifying grace, and the perfect love of God was shed abroad in her heart. Her great modesty and diffidence would not let her say much; but all her words, works, and tempers showed what great things the Lord had done for her soul. One striking part of her conduct among many others I would mention here, recommending it to the imitation of all, especially to those of her own sex. When anything of a trying nature happened in the society, while others would have been talking over and repeating grievances, her method always was to retire immediately for secret prayer, where she usually left her burden with the Lord. She was of few words; no tattler, no busy-body, but a keeper at home. She carefully refrained from speaking evil of any one; but when any had used her unkindly, or caused pain to her mind, she bore it in silence, and recommended them to God in prayer. She would never dispute with any one. While she lived, her whole deportment was an unspeakable blessing to me. And in her death she gave

testimony of God's power to save to the uttermost them that come to Him through Christ Jesus.

In the year 1779 I was appointed to labour at Leeds, where I found a people ripe for the doctrine of holiness; and many that year believed unto full salvation. This was the richest soil for Methodism I had yet known. We found two thousand two hundred members in society, and about twenty local preachers, who greatly assisted us in the work, and the word of the Lord ran and was glorified; to which the harmony which subsisted between the preachers, stewards, leaders, and people greatly contributed.

In the year 1780 I went to Sheffield, where I found a large society, but less united than those I had left; and therefore I was not so comfortable for a time as I could wish. It grieved me also that one of my fellow labourers did not lovingly draw in the same yoke, and soon after left the Connexion.[1] The uneasiness occasioned in the society by his disaffection for some months threatened us with disagreeable consequences; and our enemies expected a considerable division among us: but 'He that sitteth above the waterfloods' found means to prevent it. So that, instead of losing in our number, we found at the end of the year an increase of ninety-seven members.

In the latter end of June, Mr. Wesley, according to his usual tour, came to Sheffield, where Mr. Bradford, who then travelled with him, was taken very ill, and was obliged to desist. I took his

[1]Alexander McNab.

place for about six weeks; but I soon found my constitution was inadequate to the task. Being much fatigued with riding in the heat, which was very intense at that time, I was seized with a bilious complaint the first day the Conference began at Leeds.[1] Dr. Hamilton, with other physicians, paid every attention to my case, which appeared very doubtful for some days. The chief means whereby I found relief were bleeding and the warm bath, but it was some time before I was pronounced out of danger. I here learned some useful lessons while under my Father's rod; He gave me peace and resignation when my pain was most extreme, and during my whole confinement I do not know that I had one murmuring thought. After my recovery, I felt a degree of gratitude which I had not known before; and a resolution fixed in my heart to be more devoted to God and zealous for the good of souls than ever.

I was appointed to labour another year in Sheffield, and was highly favoured with the assistance of two good young men.[2] We laboured together in harmony; had peace in all our borders, and the work of God greatly prospered. Many souls were awakened and born of God, and one hundred and forty were added to the society.

In the year 1782 I was appointed for Macclesfield. As the circuit was large and unwieldy, four preachers were sent, with instructions to divide it. We did this in the best manner we could;

[1] August 7, 1781.
[2] William Percival and Joseph Taylor.

and my worthy colleague, Mr. Myles, took charge of the Burslem division. But this, with some other amendments, such as furnishing the preachers' dwelling-house by subscription, changing the stewards, &c., gave deep offence to a few individuals. But the hearts of the people were united to their preachers; and notwithstanding all the difficulties we met with, we were greatly comforted among them, and at the end of two years I had the satisfaction of leaving them considerably increased in number; and I trust, upon the whole, not less alive to God than I found them.

But all the trials I had ever known were small when compared with that which I was here called to bear. After a lingering sickness of about two months' continuance, the Lord saw it right to tear from my bleeding heart the dear partner of my cares and sorrows, my ever faithful and affectionate wife.

She cried, 'Come, come, come! Saviour, Saviour! come, come, come!' And gently leaning back, she sweetly sunk into His arms, at half-past five o'clock on Sunday morning, February 15 (1784): having just seen her birthday, and ended her twenty-ninth year in a world of sorrow, she began with her Lord in paradise that Sabbath which shall have no end. My youngest son, a lovely child, died at the same time, aged eight months; and they were both laid in one grave.[1]

I was now left with my two little boys, one four, the other only two, years old. But the Lord was

[1] See 'Short Account' in *Arminian Magazine*, 1785, p. 20.

merciful both to them and me, who in the course of His providence raised us up a kind friend in Miss Roe, the only daughter of the late Rev. James Roe, of Macclesfield, an intimate acquaintance and twin soul of their dear mother; and for whom both they and I have had cause to be thankful ever since.

As I clearly perceived the Lord had prepared in her another help-meet for me, and one every way calculated to assist me both in my soul and labours, I therefore entered into the marriage state a second time on August 19, 1784. And now that eight years are nearly elapsed, I have found no cause to alter my judgement, but, on the contrary, have often blessed God for such a yokefellow. And it has pleased the Lord to make her useful in her present calling to many, especially those of her own sex.[1] She was in some measure prepared for this, not only by a pious and liberal education from her childhood, but by an early conversion to God. She was deeply awakened and brought to the saving knowledge of Christ at the age of seventeen; and a short time after that felt the need of a farther work of grace. For this she earnestly entreated the Lord, who soon came to her help.

> He spoke the second time, 'Be clean,'
> And took away her inbred sin.

From that time (now eighteen years ago),

[1] Hester Ann Rogers is still recognized as one of the saints of Methodism, and her memoirs and letters have been greatly blessed. She died on October 10, 1794.

though variously tempted and tried in common with others, she has held fast her confidence in God. And from the time I first had the happiness of becoming acquainted with her, I have seen nothing in her conduct inconsistent with her profession. The evenness of her temper, and the cheerfulness of her disposition, as well as her faith and prayers, have greatly contributed to my comfort, when closely exercised and tried from different quarters. She was certainly the especial gift of God to me. And I have not the shadow of a doubt but we shall, after a few more conflicts here, follow her who is gone before, and all spend a glorious eternity together in recounting the wonders of Providence and of grace.

Immediately after our marriage, we hastened to my appointment in Dublin, where we safely arrived, in a Liverpool packet, after an agreeable passage of thirty hours.

I had not been many days in that city before I saw some fruit of my labour, and was fully satisfied that my going there was of the Lord. A few years ago there had been a sifting time in the society. But the troublers of Israel were now removed, and we found the people fully prepared to receive the gospel of peace. Within the space of six weeks several found mercy, and returned public thanks to Almighty God for a sense of His pardoning love; and many more were deeply awakened.

This we received as a token for good, and the hopes of all were encouraged to expect a more glorious outpouring of the Spirit. For this a

general spirit of supplication was given, and the Lord answered for Himself in a wonderful and glorious manner. At the quarterly lovefeast, Sunday, October 10 (the first we kept together), soon after the people began to speak their experience, a poor woman under deep conviction cried aloud for all present to pray for her. We all instantly fell upon our knees, and entreated the Lord on her behalf. In that moment the power of God descended in such a manner that I believe not one unaffected soul remained under the roof. We continued wrestling in prayer for nearly half an hour, and afterwards found not less than seven souls were clearly justified; and many who had received notes of admission on that occasion were deeply awakened, and immediately joined the society. The next evening another was justified under the word, and two more under the last prayer, when also a poor backslider felt that the Lord had healed him. Within the next week following, five others were brought into gospel liberty; and the month ensuing, thirteen more. At a lovefeast held in our Gravel Walk Chapel, November 18, eight persons received a sense of pardon, two backsliders were restored, and a stranger, who had got admittance for that time, was truly awakened. About a fortnight after this, we had our band-lovefeast, when two more were justified, and three professed to be at the same time renewed in love. In the beginning of December, one was justified at St. Patrick's Church when receiving the sacrament; and one who had been educated a Roman Catholic, but was

awakened about six weeks before, received a sense of pardon under the word in our preaching-house; as did two more, who were convinced of sin at one of the above-mentioned lovefeasts.

On Christmas Day our chapel at Whitefriars was well filled at four o'clock in the morning. We continued in preaching, exhortation, and prayer till eight. It was a memorable season, and the power of God was manifest in the whole congregation. I cannot ascertain the exact number of souls that were converted to God, but several found a clear sense of His pardoning love shed abroad in their hearts; and many others were awakened, who had remained until that time entire strangers both to God and His people.[1]

The first Sunday in the new year all the society, with several other friends, assembled together to renew their covenant with God. It was a most solemn season. I seldom remember to have felt more of the divine presence at any time. The language of my heart, and I believe of most present, was, 'How awful is this place! Surely it is the house of God: this is the gate of heaven.' So it was found to be: three penitents and two backsliders were at that blessed ordinance reconciled to God by faith in the blood of Christ. And on the Thursday and Friday evenings following, while the form of the covenant was farther explained, four more received forgiveness of sins; and two others under the preaching on the ensuing Sabbath.

[1] See also *The Experience of Mrs. Hester Ann Rogers* (letter to John Fletcher).

From that time to the 25th of March, thirty-six more received a sense of pardoning mercy. On Good Friday two more were justified under the word, and one at the communion in St. Patrick's. On Easter Day many could witness, 'Christ is risen indeed.' Two received a sense of pardon in the morning, and in the evening four more felt the power of Him who bruised the head of the serpent, while attending to a sermon delivered from Gen. iii. 15; and, beside these, three others were blessed with a degree of inward liberty they had not known before. We had reason to hope our honoured father, Mr. Wesley, would have spent his Easter with us, but being detained in England longer than he expected, he did not arrive in Dublin until April 11; before which time three more were pardoned; two backsliders were restored; and two others experienced the great truth, 'the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin.' Mr. Wesley spent about a fortnight in the city, during which time eight persons were justified under his preaching; and before he returned from visiting the country societies, fifteen souls found peace with God.

In the time of our Conference, two others received a sense of pardon, and three more were enabled to believe to full salvation. The whole number of souls brought into the glorious liberty of the children of God, in the course of the year past, was a hundred and thirty; and an increase in the society of two hundred members, after excluding all those whom we judged improper to remain.

When I found my fellow labourer was to be removed, I made it matter of much prayer to God that He would send me another suitable in every respect. The Lord fulfilled my desire, and gave me Christopher Peacock; a man every way adapted to the work, who was also my son in the gospel of Christ,[1] and for whom I had a most tender affection. He was a laborious, zealous young man, full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, and his ministry was attended with abundant success. But it pleased Him who seeth not as man seeth, and 'whose judgements are a great deep,' early to deprive us of this valuable man of God! A putrid fever was commissioned to snatch him away (perhaps from some evil to come) in the midst of his usefulness, and the full vigour of youth. He finished his course February 15, 1786, in the thirty-fourth year of his age.

The affliction and death of one I loved so much, with what I felt for the people in losing such a helper, so greatly affected my bodily health that, for some weeks, I thought I must have sunk under the burden. Application was made to Mr. Wesley to fill up the vacancy, but in vain, as all the preachers were engaged. This was an awful period; and I greatly feared the glorious revival, which we were now in the very midst of, would at least be impeded. But the death of a preacher so much beloved had a good effect upon the people: we cried to the Lord, and He was better to us

[1] An account of him is given in the *Arminian Magazine*, 1786, p. 355.

than all our fears; and, great as my fatigue was, my health grew better; so did the Lord perfect His strength in human weakness. I was led to consider this was the Lord's work, and that He could carry it on with or without means, or by what instruments He chose. The congregations continued very large, and the prayer-meetings and classes exceedingly lively; and scarcely a week passed in which some were not awakened and joined to the society; and frequently under the word, or at other ordinances, three, four, or five would be found to praise God for His converting grace. And, although they were amazingly happy in the love of Christ, yet there was scarcely any appearance of what is commonly called wildfire; and the work was not only gradual, but deep in most of them who were the subjects of it. The number of persons whom we had reason to believe were savingly brought to the knowledge of God among us, in the course of the second year, was one hundred and seventy-eight souls, which is forty-eight more than in the former year; and the society amounted to more than nine hundred members.

Having had so considerable an increase, and for so long a time together, it was natural to expect, according to the common course of things, the tide would now begin to ebb. But He who is able to do above all that we can ask or think still continued to awaken sinners in great numbers. Zion's cords were lengthened, and her converts flowed in from every quarter. Several concurring circumstances induced Mr. Wesley to comply with

the request of the society in leaving me amongst them another year; and I was favoured with a fellow labourer of piety, integrity, and good abilities[1]; nor did the Lord give us less fruit than before. When we came to deliver up our charge at the yearly Conference, after thoroughly weeding the classes, and lopping off one hundred and twenty-six members, some for immorality, and others for omitting to meet their class, yet the society had increased to eleven hundred and thirty-six; which made in all an addition of above six hundred souls in three years; and, from the best accounts we could keep, we had every reason to believe four hundred and fifty-eight of these were savingly converted to God.

In the year 1787 I was stationed for Cork. But before I could enter upon my new appointment, some temporal matters rendered it necessary that I and my wife should first go to Macclesfield. The journey appeared more pleasing, as we were honoured with the company of Mr. Wesley, Dr. Coke, and others of our preachers and their wives across the Channel. But although the passage in general was agreeable, yet it was attended with some danger. When we had gone about half way from Dublin to Parkgate, the packet, borne down by a rapid tide from the Welsh coast, suddenly struck upon a rock, where we lay beating vehemently for about an hour. The captain ordered all the women and children upon deck, to try if we could save their lives, expecting every minute the ship would go to

[1] Henry Moore.

pieces. But through the kind providence of God, and after fervent prayer to Him for deliverance, it pleased the Lord to interpose in our behalf, so that we got clear again, though not without some damage to the vessel. However, the pump was sufficient to keep it up till we reached the port.[1]

Having settled our affairs, we hastened back to Dublin, and from thence to Cork, where, after a journey of nearly seven hundred miles, to and fro, by sea and land, we were gladly received by an affectionate people, who were studious to make our lives comfortable. Some unhappy jarrings the preceding year had considerably injured the work of God; so that in visiting the classes I found, about three weeks after I arrived, the society reduced from five hundred to three hundred and ninety-seven members. My fellow labourer was a pious man and a good preacher; and we had the happiness to see peace and prosperity return. We added a hundred to the society before New Year's Day; and have reason to believe upwards of sixty of these were converted to God.

But the progress of the work did not stop here; the Lord continued to prosper His word to the salvation of many souls in that city. And it is probable more good would have been done but for a few troublesome spirits, who, under a pretence of standing up for the Church, hurt the minds of many. The Lord greatly blessed His word among the soldiers. Eight sergeants and

[1] Cf. Wesley's *Journal*, July 11, 1787.

about forty privates met constantly in class, and some of them became eminent for piety. Notwithstanding every difficulty cast in the way, the society increased to six hundred and sixty; many of whom were much alive to God, and ornaments to their profession when we left them.

About this time one of our travelling preachers, a pious good man, related to me the following instance of the divine interposition, namely: A few months ago, as he was travelling on his circuit, he was met by three robbers; one seized the horse by the bridle, a second clapped a pistol to his breast, and a third catched hold of him to pull him from his horse, all swearing they would instantly have his money or his life. He looked them steadfastly in the face, saying, 'Friends, did you pray this morning?' They seemed greatly confounded. But one of them instantly took his watch out of his pocket. Another took off his saddle-bags, and pulled out a knife to rip them open; but he cried, 'Stop, friend! there is nothing there but a few religious books, and you are very welcome to have them to read if you please; and as to money, I have only twopence halfpenny,' which he took out of his pocket immediately, and gave to one of them. 'Now,' says he, 'shall I give you my coat? You are welcome to anything I have about me: only I would have you to remember I am a servant of God, and am now going on His errand. I am going to preach at such a place, and I beg you will let me pray with you before we part; and it

may do you more good than anything I have given to you.' At this one of them said to the rest, 'We will keep nothing belonging to this man; if we do, vengeance will pursue us.' He took the money and returned it with his own hands into his pocket, and insisted that the other should return the watch; which, after a little hesitation, he put back also; and the third, taking up the bags, laid them on the horse, and fastened them to the saddle again. He thanked them all for their great civility; and again renewing his request that they would let him pray with them, he fell upon his knees on the road, and prayed with great power. Two of them went off, but the third kneeled close by him all the time, and was very much affected; so that there was reason to hope he was resolved to become a new man.

In the year 1790 I was appointed for London. Here I found a numerous, pious, and loving people, who have been accustomed to the Methodist discipline from the beginning, and who, in general, pay attention to our rules, for conscience' sake. We have an extensive field of action in this great metropolis, and plenty of work for more than three times the number of itinerant preachers that have ever yet been employed on this circuit. When my coming was first proposed to me, I felt exceedingly the importance of such a charge, and should have objected to the appointment, only I was afraid of running counter to the order of God. But I did not foresee the solemn scene which lay before me, or my timidity would

probably have prevailed. I had much comfort, both in my labours and family connexions, for nearly seven months. But it is impossible to describe what I felt on the removal of our venerable father to paradise: yet I esteem it the greatest honour ever done me that I was providentially called to accompany him in his last journey, and be with him in his latest moments.[1]

Added to this irreparable loss, many other disagreeable circumstances, arising from the general stir occasioned through our whole Connexion by this awful event, made the situation of my brethren and me here very distressing. God alone knoweth how my own mind was exercised from the time of Mr. Wesley's death till the Conference. But when I came to Manchester, and saw what manner of spirit the preachers in general were of, how brotherly love prevailed among them, and that all were resolved to go on in the good old way, the snare of the enemy was entirely broken. I therefore returned to my charge with joy, fully resolved to act in harmony with my brethren, and, by the help of God, to live and die an itinerant Methodist preacher.

It is matter of praise that the great Head of the Church is still with us in a powerful manner. Many are the souls that have been convinced and brought to God amongst us, in and near this city, in the space of eighteen months last past. The congregations are large and attentive; and the

[1] See *Wesleyan Methodist Magazine*, 1908, p. 81. In 1796 Rogers published an account of his experience and labours, giving many details of Wesley's last days.

societies are increased to upward of three thousand members, which is more by some hundreds than they ever were before. But Satan has not been wanting to stir up a spirit of discord in some; nevertheless, the Lord has graciously overruled it hitherto, so that the people in general are in peace, and the word of the Lord continues to run and is glorified. But to return to my own experience.

I observed in the former part of this account that my justification was particularly clear; so was also the work of sanctification; and as I received the former of these by faith alone, so did I the latter. But I did not retain the witness of full salvation long. Nevertheless, the Lord has graciously restored it to me at different times; and yet as often have I proved unfaithful, and, by giving way to unbelief, have been robbed of my confidence, as it related to that grace. I bless God I now feel a measure of the genuine fruits of holiness; yet I am clear I have not so much of these as many of the adult children of God do possess. I feel myself utterly unworthy of the least of the mercies of my Lord; but my trust is in His righteousness. I feel a need of recurring daily to the blood of sprinkling, and am persuaded that the Lord will correct and pardon what He sees amiss.

It is now twenty-nine years since I was first convinced of sin; and a little more than twenty-three since I tasted of the pardoning love of God: from which time (excepting once for a space of about two months) I have been enabled,

through grace, to look up to God as my reconciled Father in Christ Jesus. About twenty-two of those years I have been endeavouring in some small measure to recommend the same blessing to others; and I praise the Lord who hath given me some reason to believe I did not run before I was sent. Yet I have much cause to be ashamed before God that I have not been more holy and more useful. However, one thing I can say, the same principle I set out with continues until this day. It was the 'love of Christ' which then 'constrained me.' And the language of my soul now is,

> My life, my blood I here present,
> If for Thy cause they may be spent;
> Thy faithful witness will I be,
> 'Tis fixed, I can do all through Thee.

Before I left home to preach the gospel, I thought an itinerant life was calculated, above all others, to promote a growth in grace, as it cuts off all pecuniary advantages and secular concerns. I still believe God is able to uphold His messengers, and cause His grace to abound towards them. But, upon the whole, few are more critically circumstanced, all things considered, than a Methodist preacher: especially those who are called to superintend in our Connexion. It is a mercy, indeed, if while these are looking to their Lord's vineyard, they do not neglect their own. I often fear this has been too much my own case; and have heartily wished I had less to do with public affairs in the Church of God, and that

I might spend the whole of my time in recommending the love of Christ to perishing sinners. But one thing I firmly believe—whatever the Lord calls to, He will qualify for; and that He never calls them who love Him to anything which will necessarily make them love Him less; and therefore, if I have suffered loss in my own soul, I take all the blame to myself. It is certain every minister of Christ requires not only much wisdom and prudence, but also peculiar resolution and firmness of mind. He that would faithfully serve Christ and His cause among us must not seek the favour of men. Nevertheless, 'the servant of the Lord should not strive; but be gentle unto all men; apt to teach, patient; in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves. For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.' It might have been more consistent with my own peace had I paid more strict attention to this rule in some cases.

I have often brought heaviness upon my mind by reproving with too much warmth what I believed wrong at the time; and perhaps I have incurred the displeasure of some, more than needful; who, for want of candour, have retained prejudice to their own hurt. But I trust, in future, the Lord will fortify my mind with patience, and give me more of that love which 'beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, and endureth all things.'

My soul at present doth hunger and thirst after a more entire conformity to the image of God. I see nothing so desirable as holiness; and I am

resolved, through grace, to recommend it to all, both by example and precept; and I pray God His kingdom may descend with power. I trust the time is near when the Lord shall appear to make an end of sin in me—in all—and bring in everlasting righteousness; and that the whole earth shall soon be filled with His glory. He who hath promised it saith, 'Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.'

For three years after the conclusion of this narrative Mr. Rogers continued his itinerant labours; and then he was compelled to desist.

In the *Minutes* of Conference for 1807 it is said: 'He settled in Guisborough, within five miles of the place of his nativity. Here he usually preached twice a week, till he was called to the bosom of his God. An inflammation on his lungs terminated, in ten days from its commencement, his earthly existence. He contemplated the approach of death with that calmness and resignation which characterize the genuine saint; and when his afflicted wife observed to him, seeing him struggling for breath, "This is hard work, my dear," he replied, as he could get utterance, "Good work, good work, once for all!" Thus prepared, his spirit took its flight to Paradise on January 28, 1807. It is worthy of remark that, until the time of his last illness, he rose every morning at six o'clock, even through the winter, and in his very debilitated state, and devoted an hour to the perusal of the holy Scriptures.'

MATTHIAS JOYCE.[1]

I WAS born in Dublin, February 17, 1754, of honest, industrious parents. My mother, who was a serious woman, was born in London, and professed herself a member of the Church of England. But my father, being a member of the Church of Rome, got me baptized in that Church, and instructed me himself, as far as he was capable, in the principles thereof.

When I was a little more than two years old, my sister, going one night on an errand with me in her arms, let me fall into a deep window, where there was a great quantity of broken glass and other rubbish. Close to the bottom of the window ran a rapid stream, which descended from the mountains of Wicklow, and emptied itself into the Liffey. The night being dark, and I not making the least noise, she thought I was carried down the stream and lost. However, she brought a candle, and found me lying across a stick that was in the window; which prevented my falling into the stream.

When I was about eight years old, a horse kicked me so violently on my thigh that I fell to the ground, and yet I received no material harm. And about the same time I fell from a high wall, but was not much hurt.

[1] *Arminian Magazine*, 1786, p. 132.

When ten or eleven years old, I was thrown from a horse on full gallop, but received no harm. When I was about thirteen, coming one day from a review in the Phœnix Park, the road was thronged with horses and carriages. A man in a chaise called me from the other side of the road to speak to him. While I stood talking with him, a horse on full gallop darted against me with his shoulder, knocked me down in an instant, went over me, and left me sprawling on the ground; but, through the interposition of Providence, I was only stunned a little.

About the same time I was thrown down by two horses in a carriage, and was very much hurt; while I was down, one of the horses trod upon me; but the driver stopping in a moment, I had time to creep out of the way.

When I was about seven years old, my mother struck me gently on my hand for some fault I had committed; on which I called upon God to d—n her. I was soon seized with conviction for this; nor did it entirely wear away for several years. While it lasted I was frequently so terrified that I could not see how I could be saved; and sometimes I concluded I was born on purpose to be damned. But as I had heard among the Papists that a child must be seven years old before sin can be charged upon him, I often calculated how old I was when I cursed my mother; and if I could bring my age under seven, then I felt some ease.

When I was about ten years old, one of my companions and I made an agreement to swear

no more; and, blessed be God, since that time swearing was not my besetting sin.

When I was about thirteen, I was taken from school, and my father and mother being mostly abroad, I was suffered to range wherever I pleased. Accordingly, I spent most of my time with those who neither feared God nor regarded man.

In June, 1768, my father sent me to Mr. ——; upon trial, to learn the art of printing. Though by this means I was removed from my old companions, I still retained my love of sin, and, if possible, ran into greater excess of riot.

As I increased in years, my pride and passion increased also; an instance of which is as follows. One evening my master's son wanted me to do something for him, which I refused; upon which he went and told his father, who, coming into the shop, ordered me to do it directly. I told him plainly I would not. On this he seized an oak stick, and laid it on me until he broke it; but so great was my pride that I verily believe I would not have submitted had I been sure of falling dead at his feet!

As I was very strong for my size, I was made to do the drudgery about the shop, such as carrying bundles of books to the inns, &c. My master's son, one time thinking to have some sport by raising my spirit, called me 'Porter, porter!' I could not bear this. My pride beginning to swell, I desired him to let me alone; but he would not. I then snatched a large pair of shears, and threw them at him; but, though he was not more than two yards from me, Providence so guided them

that, instead of darting into his belly, they only went into his coat, and hung there.

In September, 1771, I resolved to run away from my master, and enter on board a man-of-war. About the beginning of December, one of the men complained of me to my master for idleness, for which he gave me a gentle slap on the cheek. My pride then got the better of my judgement, and I determined he should strike me no more. Accordingly that evening I fled from the house, with a full resolution never to return. I wandered about the city for some days, waiting for a fellow servant who was to go with me.

Having spent the last Sabbath in taking leave of my friends I got drunk. Then I returned to the place of rendezvous, where my companion and I quarrelled; and because I could not get my revenge gratified, I drew out a knife to kill myself. But several persons being in the room, got about me, threw me on a bed, and wrested the knife out of my hand.

The next day, as we intended to set sail for Liverpool, my father and sister came to see me set off. My poor father wept bitterly, and said, 'Now I am left alone. I have no one to be of any comfort to me now. I shall never see thee again.' He was at this time above seventy years of age; but neither his age, infirmities, nor tears could prevail on me to stay. So I kissed him, and bade him farewell.

When I was on the great deep, it was so exceeding pleasant that I thought if I had a fortune, I would even then go to sea. After a passage of

two days we arrived safe at Liverpool. We had not been long there before my comrade wanted me to return; but I said I would not. That night we stayed at Liverpool, and the next day crossed the ferry, and went forward to Chester. But it being exceedingly dirty, travelling was very fatiguing; so that I had not gone many miles before I began to be very weary; then, with tears in my eyes, I reflected on my folly, and wished to be at my master's again.

After a disagreeable journey of four days, we arrived at Birmingham. By this time our money was spent, which was doubtless a singular providence; for if I had had money sufficient, I should have gone straight to London, and entered on board a man-of-war. At Birmingham I had a brother-in-law, of the same business with myself, who soon got me into work: but my comrade could not get any, so he was obliged to sell his coat to bear his charges to London. When we parted, we both wept much; but I never saw or heard of him from that time to this.

About the latter end of February, 1772, there came a countryman of mine from London to work where I was. I told him what I had done. He reproved me very sharply for it, saying I could never show my face in Ireland; for if I did, I must serve that time over again. What he said rested upon my mind, and made me resolve to return the first opportunity, and serve my lawful master.

Accordingly, one Monday morning, this man and I set off together for Ireland. He had fivepence, and I had threepence. We made the

best of our way to Wolverhampton, where we got a shilling from Mr. Smart, the master printer. From thence we pursued our journey to Alberton. It was quite dark before we got there. We had a crooked dirty road, and could not tell where we were, nor see each other at a small distance; yet we urged our way till we entered the town. Here we got a lodging among a parcel of gipsies, and after some conversation we went to bed, and in the morning pursued our journey.

The hardships I endured in this journey far exceeded all I met with before. We were brought so low that my companion went to a farmhouse to beg; and, as he told me afterwards, sung a song for his dinner. But to beg I was ashamed; so I pursued my way, hungry and weary as I was, to Chester, and by this means lost my companion for two days.

When I came within half a mile of Chester, I sat down to rest myself. While I sat, my joints stiffened, and I became more sensible of pain. My feet also swelled, and my thighs were raw with walking. Here I sat, a poor forlorn wretch; without money, food, or any visible help. Nor did I know where to turn myself when I entered the city; but I had a hope it would be well with me when I got there. After some time I strove to rise; but it was with the greatest difficulty I got first on one knee, then on the other. However, by degrees, with excessive pain I got on my feet, and crept on. Just as I came to the river Dee, I saw a man with two pitchers of water, resting himself. I went to him, and asked him to let me

drink. He said if it was sack I should have it, and held the pitcher to my mouth. Having drunk freely, he asked me how far I came. I told him. He asked me if I had got any lodgings. I said, 'No; neither have I any money to give for one.' Then said he, 'The Lord succour you! for you are come into a bad place; but come along with me.' Accordingly, I went with him to his house, where he set before me hanged beef, bread, and potatoes; and made me eat until I could eat no more.

After dinner he went with me to look for work. On showing me a master printer in the street, I went up to him, and asked if he wanted a hand. He looked at me, and seeing me very young (being then about eighteen), he said, 'You are a runaway from your master; and therefore if I had room for ten men, I would not give you work' 'Oh, sir,' said I, 'will you give me something? for I am in very great distress.' He answered, with a degree of sternness, 'I will not give you one farthing.' As soon as he said this, I turned from him, and was afraid to try anywhere else. On saying to my friend, 'I will sell my waistcoat,' he said, 'Then come with me, and I will show you where you will get as much for it as in any part of the city.' Accordingly, he brought me to a woman whose name was Reely, wife to Sergeant Reely, belonging to the Yorkshire Militia, who sold clothes for people, and got threepence in the shilling for selling them. When she saw me, she pitied my case; and when I stripped off my coat and waistcoat, she began to weep, and asked

if I had nothing else to sell. I said, 'No.' Then she said she would sell it for as much as she could, and not charge me anything. She did so, and brought me three shillings for it. She also made me stay to supper, and washed my feet and handkerchief. She likewise cleaned my shoes and sent her daughter to get me a lodging; and insisted on my having a bed to myself, let it cost what it would, and said she would pay for it herself. She also sent her daughter in the morning with my handkerchief and stockings, which she had washed, and gave me a loaf when I was going away, and charged me not to change my money until I got to Liverpool.

When I arrived at Liverpool, there was a vessel to sail the next day. Accordingly, I went on board, with only tenpence of my three shillings left, which was only the third part of what would pay for my passage. With this I ventured on board, without any provisions, trusting to the generosity of a sailor on whom I had spent some of my money, and who promised, in lieu of that, to supply me with what food I wanted during the passage. Just as the vessel was about to sail, my companion, whom I had lost for two days, came on board; who, having earned something, had just as much left, when joined to mine, as made up the price of one of us.

We set sail with a fair wind, while the sun shone bright upon us; but we had not been long at sea when a dreadful storm arose. The vessel was tossed about like a cork, and the sea dashed over it with dreadful violence; while the waves,

beating against her sides, made a noise like the report of a cannon.

Most in the hold were much terrified, and a few were endeavouring to pray; while I, hardened wretch! was highly diverted. At last a great wave dashed with such fury against the side of the ship that I expected it would be beaten in. The fear of death now laid hold upon me, and I thought it was time for me also to pray. I therefore crept on my knees into a dark corner, and uttered a few heartless petitions. At length, after twenty-five hours' sail, we arrived safe in Pool-Beg. What money I had I gave to my companion, to make up the price of his passage, and sent him to my father to come and release me. The captain kept me prisoner all night, and threatened to take me back; but my brother-in-law came down the next morning early, paid for my passage, and brought me safe on shore.

I was a month in Dublin before my master would take me back; during wh ch time I lived with my father. One day I met one of my old companions in the street, whom I wanted to come and dine with us. My father was not satisfied at this. Being highly offended, I refused to eat or drink with him, and so left him. He soon followed me, and reprimanded me for my conduct. I resented it immediately, by giving him impertinent answers; upon which he grew very angry, and came forward to strike me. I stood up to oppose him; being fully determined to give blow for blow! I was at that time so inflamed with infernal fire that I verily believe

I should have done all in my power to have knocked him down if he had been permitted to come near me.

At last my master consented to take me home, upon condition that two persons would be bound for me in twenty pounds each. The bail being given, he received me again without an angry word.

After this I went on tolerably well for about a fortnight, till one of my fellow apprentices gave me saucy language. As I could not bear it, I gave him a blow. He went immediately to my master, and complained, who sent up his son to know why I struck him. I sent him word that he was impudent, and that I would not take an affront from anybody. My master then came up with a large whip, and beat me most severely.

Not long after this, I took it into my head to run away a second time. Accordingly, I went twice to look for a vessel; but the captain of a Bristol vessel that I thought to go with refusing what I offered him for my passage, I gave up the thoughts of going abroad.

But though I was so far settled, I still went on in sin, and grew worse and worse every day. About this time I fell into the cursed practice of gaming, by means of a certain person of some note (now in eternity) who came to my master's. I remember, my fellow apprentice and I had a great run of luck one night, when playing with my master's son. The next night he was afraid to play, and so went to bed; but I went to his chamber, and would not let him rest until he

most unwillingly, got out of bed to encounter me again. That night he stripped me of every farthing. I asked him to lend me a little to enable me to try my fortune again; but he would not. On this, I found as much of the spirit of the devil as ever I did in my life. If it had not been for preventing grace, I believe I should have murdered him.

To carry on this wretched employment, the aforementioned person contrived a ladder of ropes, to let himself and others out of a back window in the night, in order to go to the gaming-table; and I was so deeply concerned in the scheme as to drive in the hook, and go out first to try it. But the Lord brought about a discovery of the matter, which put an entire stop to it; yet not until my master's son lost about twenty-eight guineas, which were stolen out of his father's drawers by our instructor.

However, I continued to be led captive by drunkenness, till I threw myself into a pleurisy. Then I thought I should have died, and was in some measure convinced I was not fit to die. On this I resolved to reform my conduct if I recovered; but of turning to God as yet I had no notion.

As soon as I was raised up, and was able to go abroad, I forgot my resolution, and as eagerly gave myself up to the service of sin as before; for, the second or third night after my recovery, I stayed out drinking till near twelve o'clock. My master hearing of it, said to one of the men next morning, 'Why will you take that fellow

out? He is but just recovered from a fit of sickness, into which he threw himself by drinking. I do not know what to do with him. Beating does him no good, and I am quite tired of it. I therefore give up all hope of his ever doing any good.' And well he might, if there was no God; for it was beyond the power of man to turn the stream of my affections to that which is good. But God's thoughts were not like my master's: there was hope in Israel still concerning even me! For, notwithstanding my daring impiety and repeated provocations, the Lord was waiting to be gracious.

In the month of September, 1773, and in the nineteenth year of my age, Mr. Wesley came to Dublin, when curiosity prevailed on me to go and hear him one Sabbath-day morning. As soon as I saw him, my heart clave to him; his hoary hairs and grave deportment commanded my respect, and gained my affections. What endeared him still more to me was seeing him stoop to kiss a little child that stood on the stairs. However, though this prepared me for receiving the word of life, so great was my darkness that I could not understand what he said; and therefore went away as ignorant as I came.

The next preacher I took notice of was Mr. Floyd. But I thought the first sermon I heard him preach was mere nonsense. However, I heard him again, and thought this sermon the best I had ever heard. After this I went every other Sabbath to the preaching; yet still I was led captive by the devil at his will: but though I

repeatedly resisted the Holy Ghost, yet my long-suffering God did not cease striving with me. For, instead of giving me up, as He might justly have done, He deepened His work in my heart, and gave me to see that if I remained a companion of fools, I must inevitably be destroyed. On this I resolved to quit them all; which resolution I was enabled to perform; and my fellow apprentice and I agreed to watch over each other, and to reprove each other when we saw occasion.

About this time a providential circumstance helped to confirm my resolution of quitting the Church of Rome. I was one day in the shop while my master's son was turning over some old pamphlets that had lain by for years as useless papers; at last he picked up one which contained an account of the conversion of Anthony Egan, a Popish priest, in which he discovers a variety of tricks made use of by the priests to deceive the people. Annexed to this were twelve queries taken from the Word of God, and proposed to the Church of Rome. When he looked at the title-page, he judged it would do for me; so, handing it to me, he said, 'Matt, I will give thee this; it may be it will convert thee.' I thankfully received it, and gave it a careful reading; the effects of which were: (1) A clearer discovery of the Church of Rome; (2) An indignation against those abominable tricks made use of by the priests; (3) A great contempt for a set of men who, to support a bad cause, were constrained to make use of such shifts, instead

of sound argument; (4) A resolution to have no farther connexion with them.

From this time I was very constant in hearing the Methodists, and walked more circumspectly than formerly. I was likewise more constant in private devotions, and had some small conviction of the necessity of a farther work. I also fled from my old companions wherever I met them, and felt an abhorrence to the works of darkness, and had a regard for the people of God

Thus I went on till April, 1774, when, one Sabbath-day evening, as I was going to bed, I felt an unusual love, such as I cannot express, to the people called Methodists, and a strong desire to be one of the number; but I thought they would not admit me, as I was an apprentice. However, I said to my fellow apprentice, 'If I was out of my time, I would join myself to that people.' He, being more acquainted with some of them, said they admitted apprentices. On hearing this I was glad, and resolved, without delay, to cast in my lot among them.

Accordingly, on Friday, the 6th of May, 1774, a day to be had in remembrance by me, I waited on Mr. Jaco, to receive a note of admittance. My fellow apprentice (namely, Bennet Dugdale) went with me, more out of curiosity than any real desire to become a member. Mr. Jaco brought us into a private apartment, and lovingly talked over the matter with us; then gave us our notes, saying, 'The Lord write your names in the Lamb's book of life!'

A few months after we joined the society, all the

men that were at my master's, together with their wives, joined the society; two of whom are gone into eternity, and I hope under the smiles of heaven. Most of the rest, I fear, have not adorned their Christian vocation. May that Divine Spirit who subdued my stubborn heart convince them more deeply of the necessity of giving all diligence to make their calling and election sure!

I was two months in the society before I was thoroughly convinced of the depravity of my nature, and of the necessity of being born again. But one day as I was going upstairs to the printing-office, I fell on my knees to pray (as I used frequently to do), when the Lord appeared in terrible majesty, and Mount Sinai seemed to be in a flame. His voice thundered from the dreadful mount, and spoke in terror to my inmost soul, which made me tremble exceedingly. The Holy Ghost showed me the spirituality of the law in such a manner that I saw and felt my inward parts were very wickedness. For some time I was quite dumb, and wondered that I was so great a monster! Oh what heart can conceive the exquisite distress of my soul at this moment? I groaned, being burdened with a deep sense of the wrath of God! I saw myself just on the brink of hell! I thought I was undone for ever, and despaired of ever being saved! But what distressed me most of all was my want of faith; for I thought I had not so much faith as the devil. In this condition I remained for some time before I was able to speak: at last I cried out in bitterness of

soul, 'O Lord, I went among this people to serve Thee better, but I fear I am worse than ever.' Now Satan laid close and horrible siege to my soul, in order to destroy the good work which the Lord had begun. He injected the most dreadful blasphemies, even filling me with the most horrible and uncommon ideas of God; and urging me every moment, like Job's wife, to curse Him! Often have I concluded, and could scarcely persuade myself to the contrary, that I had yielded to the temptation, and had really cursed God in my heart. O my God, Thou knowest the distress and anguish of my soul at this season; and what strong cries I put up to Thee for deliverance. But, for wise ends, Thou wouldest not grant my request until I had suffered awhile. Yet, Thou didst support me in a wonderful manner: in giving me victory over outward sin; in making my conscience more tender; and in enabling me to form a determination that if I perished, it should be in Thy service.

These dreadful suggestions, many of which I dare not name, not only haunted me through the common employments of the day, but also in my most secret retirements, and wherever else I went; so that I have been constrained to entreat God to rid me of my life, and drive me out of the world. My flesh would creep upon my back, and a fearful looking for of judgement and fiery indignation harassed me continually.

Surely I may as well forget my existence as forget the misery and iron with which I was bound, and the variety of spiritual plagues that

tormented me during my abode in the land of my captivity. And as I have found that telling my experience has been of use to some exercised in the same manner, I am not without hope that a particular but brief relation of the same may be of use to many more.

I was almost continually tempted to doubt the being of a God. One argument the devil made use of to support his hellish doctrine was, that if there was a God, He would destroy me for my blasphemous thoughts. With this temptation I had many a sore struggle; for I saw it was every way calculated to stifle my conviction and kill my good desires. I therefore resisted it with all my might, and cried vehemently to God against it. But Satan was resolved to dispute the point with me; for when I would retire in secret, he would pour in upon me like a flood, saying, 'Whom art thou praying to? Surely there is no God to hear thee; or, if there is, He cannot hear thee through the thick clouds.' On this I would be thrown into confusion, and immediately stop, thinking I was praying in vain.

Another of his temptations, which distressed me exceedingly, was concerning the Lord Jesus Christ, whether there was ever such a person in the world; and, if there was, whether John the Baptist and He did not make a league together to deceive the people. This suggestion wounded me to the quick. For so long as I was under the power of it, all hope of salvation was banished from me; because I saw there was no other way to be saved but by Him. But that text often

lifted up my hands: 'And, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon Him. And, lo, a voice from heaven said, This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.'

But then Satan attacked me most furiously from another quarter, saying, 'How canst thou tell whether the Bible is true or not? Thou knowest not but it is a cunningly-devised fable to keep the world in awe.' This temptation brought exquisite distress to my soul. But, on the other hand, I was the more stirred up to cleave to the Bible, and examine it closely, that I might be able to silence the enemy. And therefore when he tempted me to doubt it, I would take it up and kiss it, then put it into my bosom and hug it, and say in a quick and positive manner, 'I will believe it! I will believe it!'

I was helped a good deal by reading a passage in a certain book, the substance of which is as follows: 'They were either good men or bad men that wrote the Bible. If they were good men, they would not tell lies to deceive mankind, by saying they spake and wrote as they were moved by the Holy Ghost; and by saying, "Thus saith the Lord," if it was only their own invention. If they were bad men, they could not understand the deep things contained in the Bible; nor would they preach such self-denying doctrine, lest their own evil deeds should be made manifest.'

At other times it was suggested to me that I had no soul; and that when I died I should be like the beasts that perish. This temptation afflicted

me much, and cost me many a hard struggle; for, being extremely ignorant, I understood little or nothing about philosophical inquiries: yet I still made my request known unto God. At length I was led to consider the nature of my inward faculties; particularly my power of thinking. My thoughts, I found, were free and unconfined; that they could mount up to heaven, or dive into hell, in an instant; that they could with equal swiftness fly round the world, and as quick as lightning arrive at the spot I was in. I remember that one day, as I was walking with a friend, I was led to reason upon conscience when truly awakened; that it was neither visible nor substantial, like flesh and blood; and that therefore nothing material could wound or hurt it: that on this account it was different from the body, though dwelling in it: that the pain felt was different from that of the body when wounded; it being nothing else but condemnation for sin before God; whereas the body, being flesh and blood, felt no such pain, because the pain of conscience is spiritual.

I was also tempted to doubt whether there would be a day of judgement, a resurrection, or whether there were any angels or spirits.

I was tempted to doubt whether the Methodists were the people of God or not: for I thought they caused more disturbance in the world than any other people; and therefore I was nearly concluding they were all false prophets. Before the enemy was let loose upon me in the manner already mentioned, the preachers were dear to me;

and as to Mr. Wesley, I thought I would be glad to be his servant, to clean his shoes, or do the meanest office for so precious a man; but now I seemed to feel no love at all to the preachers or him, and appeared to myself quite careless whether I was in their company or not. But the Lord did not suffer me to remain long under the power of this temptation; but banished it from me by the application of a text of Scripture, Acts v. 38, 39: 'And now I say unto you, Refrain from these men, and let them alone: for if this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nought; but if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found even to fight against God.' Then I considered the Methodists as a people greatly persecuted by almost all persuasions, striving to extinguish the glorious light of the gospel, which they were spreading far and near; but to no purpose. For instead of putting it out; their light shined brighter and brighter continually; and numbers were flocking to that light, that their deeds might be made manifest. Then it was clear to me that this counsel and work was not of men, but of God. I therefore thought I had much reason to praise the Lord for honouring me with a place among His people.

Now while I was racked and torn by these horrid temptations, my convictions increased to such a degree that I saw hell moved from beneath to meet me at my coming. And as all hope of mercy seemed to be cut off, and as I thought the God of love had given me up to be a prey to the devil, I said in my heart, 'Oh if I were even a devil, I

should not be so much tormented in hell!' But though this horrid thought did not long abide with me, yet I so clearly saw that I was a hell-deserving sinner that I acknowledged with all my heart God would be just if He banished me from the glory of His presence; yet I found I would rather die than live any longer to sin against Him.

Time now was exceedingly precious to me; no moments were wilfully spent in mirth or trifling. I was in general as serious as death, and as solemn as the grave; and embraced each opportunity to call upon the name of the Lord. I also prayed out aloud when alone at my work, for a considerable time, and thought the time lost if anything occurred to make me stop praying. Thus tossed about as I was on the billows of temptation, and exquisitely distressed by heart-piercing convictions, I wandered about in the fields, and sometimes got into vaults and other secret places, to pour out my complaints before God; and when I have been going into dark places, fearful apprehensions would arise in my mind lest the devil was in some hole or corner, waiting to carry me away. But, notwithstanding this, I went forward, kneeled down, and cried mightily to God, though my heart and my flesh trembled with fear.

At this time I sought after such books as explained the nature of faith; and when I met with one that treated on this subject, I searched it with as much eagerness as a man perishing through hunger would grasp at a morsel of bread.

Sometimes in the midst of my perplexity, not knowing where to find relief, I have been almost

determined to go to the preacher, and ask him if he could tell me where or how I might find Jesus. But then I thought, As they are but men, it is not in their power to save my perishing soul. At other times I was almost persuaded to go and desire them to scratch my name out of their book; for I thought I was the greatest hypocrite that ever existed.

But though I was thus led by the burning mountain which could not be touched, and through blackness and darkness and tempest, and often heard the sound of the trumpet, and the voice of words, in a spiritual sense; yet I still remained a determined enemy to all the works of the devil. I may say, through the grace of God, I kept from every appearance of evil, as far as I knew; and if, through ignorance, I committed anything that my conscience afterwards reproved me for, I did not rest until I confessed my fault, though I have been often laughed at for my scruples.

The following is an instance of my openness of heart and tenderness of conscience at this time. I had now a great aversion to newspapers, though before that I was exceeding fond of them. But one day as I entered the printing-office, the men called me to them. When I went, I saw they were reading a newspaper. On this they said, 'You need not fear to read it'; so I looked at it, and saw a spiritual play-bill, if I may so call it, concerning the day of judgement, that was stuck up at Richmond, on the King's birthday. When I read it, I liked it exceedingly; and as I had not

much to do, I printed a few of them, in order to give away, without asking my master's leave, not thinking there was any harm in so doing. But one night, at preaching, as I was giving one of them to a friend, he asked me if I had told my master. I said, 'No.' As soon as he asked me the question, my conscience smote me, and I was filled with shame and sorrow. I returned home, determined to tell my master, let me suffer what I would.

All this while I had no relish for the pleasures of this world. My whole desire was to be alone, that I might, without interruption, pour out my complaints. The sighs and groans of my troubled soul were sometimes heard by others, who, though joined in the same society, often asked me why I did so; and some of them could not help wondering at me. But, alas! they little understood my conflicts: and perhaps it was not necessary they should; as the Father of mercies leads some in a more peaceable and quiet manner than others; though it is certain the spirit must be wounded before it can be healed.

After I had been about nine months in this condition, the Lord, in great compassion to my poor, afflicted soul, threw the *Life of Mr. John Janeway*[1] into my hands. This little book was made a most reviving cordial to me, and proved like the wine and oil poured into the wounds of the man that fell among thieves.

The part which was blessed to my soul was a

[1] Probably the 'Extract' published by Wesley in 1753. (See Green's *Wesley Bibliography*, No. 150.)

letter sent by Mr. Janeway to an acquaintance of his who was exercised nearly in the same manner that I was. For the sake of those who may be tempted, and yet may not have Mr. Janeway's Life, I beg leave to subjoin an extract from it.

'DEAR FRIEND,

'You say that you are troubled with blasphemous thoughts. So then they are your trouble, and neither sent for, nor welcome, and so are not assented to in your mind. [Tempted soul, is this the case with thee?] What then shall we say of them? If they were your own production, your heart would be delighted with its own issue.

'Sure then they are the injections of that wicked one, who is the accuser of the brethren, and the disturber of the peace of the people of God. Doth Satan use to employ his weapons, but against those that he is in fear of losing? He is not wont to assault his surest friends in this manner. Those that he has fast in his own possession, he leads on as softly as he can, fearing such disturbances would make them look about them. But those that have in some measure escaped his snare, he follows with all the discouragements he can.'

As soon as I read this the cloud vanished away, and I saw that those terrible blasphemies, and atheistical thoughts, under which I groaned so long were the suggestions of the prince of darkness, and that I had no part or lot in the matter. When Satan found he was discovered, he fled, and my soul enjoyed a comfortable hope of seeing

the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living.

The fears I had of sinking into hell were now in a great measure removed, and I could draw nigh to God with some degree of confidence.

For about a year after this, I rejoiced in hope of experiencing the forgiveness of my sins, and of having the witness of His Spirit that I was a child of God. For though I could frequently rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory, and found the burden of guilt removed; yet I would not dare to say I was justified, though at times I was ready to think I was.

I remember one day, while my mind was strongly persuaded to believe I was forgiven, I went to the preacher in order to be certain of the matter. I told him my experience. He liked what I told him very well, but gave me no satisfactory answer. I said, 'Well, sir, I believe the best way of coming to the knowledge of it is, to be much in prayer.' He said, 'It is': so I left him as doubtful of my state as ever.

Some time after, when I went to renew my ticket, Mr. M'Nab asked me if I knew my sins were forgiven. I said, 'No, sir.' He asked me, 'Why cannot you believe?' I said, 'I feel so much corruption stirring within me that I am afraid.' Then he said I was putting sanctification before justification; or, in other words, I was seeking to be made holy before my sins were forgiven; but that this heart-purifying work began as soon as we were justified. I then thought I would begin to believe from that moment. Accordingly, I could soon say, with

some degree of confidence, 'Thou art my God.' But my mind was more confirmed in this from a sermon Mr. M'Nab preached not long after, from these words: 'Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward.' I thought he preached this discourse on my account; for I was much tempted to cast my little confidence away. However, though I was encouraged for that time, yet, because I did not feel that constant joy I expected, I let go my confidence, and walked in darkness as before.

About this time there came a man from the country, an old professor, who was very fond of encouraging those who were of a doubtful mind. The first time he saw me at the preaching he took a liking to me, and in a little while we became very intimate. Our constant conversation was about religion; by which means he got some knowledge of my experience, and would, upon every occasion, be encouraging me to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. Often would he say, 'Dare you deny that Christ is yours?' when I was often at a stand what answer to give him; being afraid to say, Yes or No, lest I should tell a lie. At length, as he and I walked along one time, he said, 'I believe you do not doubt that God is able to save you; but you do not believe He is willing.' As soon as he uttered these words, the power of God rested upon me in a remarkable manner; all my doubts and fears vanished, and I was filled with faith and love. I could now no longer contain; but immediately cried out, 'Oh yes, I believe He is willing to save me! and I see

so much love in His heart towards me that I should be the most ungrateful wretch in the world if I doubted of His love any longer.'

Now my heart rejoiced in the salvation of God; being inwardly persuaded that Jesus loved me, and gave Himself for me, and that my sins were all forgiven me for His name's sake. I could now say, 'O taste and see how gracious the Lord is! Hearken, all ye that fear God, and I will tell you what He hath done for my soul: He hath brought me up out of the horrible pit, and out of the miry clay; He hath turned my complaints into songs of thanksgiving; He hath not only forgiven all my sins, but healed all my diseases: therefore doth my soul magnify the Lord, and my spirit rejoiceth in God my Saviour.'

For some time I walked in the light of God's countenance, and my mountain seemed to be very strong; but Satan assaulted me again with redoubled fury, suggesting his old temptation that there was no God. One morning in particular, while I was at the preaching, the enemy came in upon me with this temptation like a flood, so that I was wellnigh overwhelmed in the mighty waters. I was so deeply exercised during the time of the preaching that I knew nothing about the sermon after it was over. My friend who was an instrument of good to me waited after the sermon to speak to me; and when he saw me, he asked how it was with my soul. I, being distressed in mind, answered him short, saying, 'I am tempted,' and so left him. However, that day the Lord appeared to my help, and delivered

me. I think this was the last great conflict I had with the enemy on this head. It may not be amiss to remark here that after this conflict I experienced such a manifestation of the presence of God that I almost thought my nature wholly sanctified.

Soon after the enemy thrust sore at me from another quarter; telling me that I was deceiving myself, and that the enjoyments which I experienced were the effects of a heated imagination. This temptation put me to a great stand for awhile, and almost prevailed upon me to give up my shield. But I thought I would weigh the matter well before I let it go; so I reasoned in the following manner: 'The enjoyments I now experience make me cleave close to God: (1) By praising Him for His goodness; (2) By delighting more and more in His ways; (3) By earnestly longing to drink deeper and deeper into the spirit of the meek and lowly Jesus; (4) By praying that everything in me contrary to His will may be utterly destroyed. These are some of the blessed effects of the enjoyments I feel. Now if the father of lies can prove that these flow from a heated imagination, I will give up the point; but not till then. But I am persuaded he cannot; as it does not appear that enthusiasm has these effects.' Thus being delivered from these two temptations, I went on my way with some degree of comfort, and had a well-grounded hope full of immortality.

When I was enabled to turn my face towards Zion, I endeavoured to give all diligence to

escape the wrath to come. To this end I not only denied myself of all ungodliness and worldly lusts, but, in some instances, even of that which was lawful. It was common with me to fast twenty-four hours at a time; and once, from Thursday night until Saturday morning. Add to this, my eagerness to redeem my time, so that I could hardly bear the thoughts of going to bed. I have stood reading and writing, in the winter season, sometimes till two o'clock in the morning, till the calves of my legs were quite numbed with cold; and scarcely ever did I go to bed, until so conquered by sleep that the book dropped out of my hand. But though I was last in bed, I was generally the first up; so that I seldom got more than four hours' sleep. Five o'clock in the morning seldom catched me upon my pillow; for as I went to bed with reluctance, I stayed in it as short a time as I could. And whatever time I was up before the preaching, I employed either on my knees or in the Bible, or in some other good book: add to these, hard labour in my business, deep thinking, much reading, fierce temptations, and a wounded spirit! All these together bore heavily upon my constitution, and so impaired my health that I was filled with wind, and contracted a bad digestion to such a degree that the food I took merely to support nature lay like lead in my stomach. At last I became burdensome to myself, and was distressed above measure.

But Satan, who always watches his opportunity to deceive the simple, took advantage of this, and suggested that I was a glutton, or I should not be

so oppressed with my food. As I believed him, though I took care to eat moderately, and sometimes would not eat at all, I frequently concluded that my belly would destroy my soul. On this account I have often stretched myself upon the floor, and twisted and twined in pain, crying to the Lord for deliverance. One thing I remarked, that the Sabbath day was the day of sorest trial to me; so that I have denied myself of all food the most part of that day, endeavouring, if possible, to worship God in spirit and in truth.

For nearly two years I was oppressed in this manner. And though I had frequent manifestations of the goodness of God, and could at times rejoice exceedingly in His salvation; yet it was, in many respects, a dark and cloudy day.

Meantime I was much stirred up to seek after that holiness without which no man can see the Lord; and I might say, with Jane Cooper, 'that I seemed to enjoy all I wanted, while I pressed after that which I had not attained.' Such sweet consolation, and glorious liberty with God in prayer, did I experience, while I sought this blessing, that it was the very delight of my soul to be found prostrate before Him. But this holy fervour of spirit, and earnest longing for the full image of God, was in some measure cooled, partly by yielding to the risings of corrupt nature, and partly by the reasonings of an old professor.

The first time he opposed me was either the first or second time after I met in the select society. This glorious meeting, which was always attended with the presence and power of

God, and was made as marrow and fatness to my soul, he represented as a most dangerous and destructive meeting; that it would puff me up with pride. Having a high opinion of his judgement, I was almost determined never to go near it more. But in the evening I opened my mind to brother Gibson, who urged me to meet again; otherwise I believe I should have wholly declined it.

Some time after, the Lord stirred me up again to seek this unspeakable blessing; when it was my delight to be found in the company of those who, I believed, had attained, or, at least, were eagerly pressing after it. I generally left them with my soul on full stretch for God. Yet, when returning from the company of these servants of God, with my heart panting after Him, some temptation would surely be in the way. By this means I have been often stripped of my happiness, yea, and pulled back when I seemed near obtaining the prize. This has often distressed me exceedingly, and cost me many a tear.

One who had entered into this rest lent me Mr. Fletcher's Treatise on *Christian Perfection*, which was made a great blessing to me, both in convincing my judgement and quickening my soul more abundantly. The part which was chiefly blessed to me was his address to imperfect believers, who believed the doctrine of Christian perfection attainable. One night, when my little family was gone to bed, I took up this book to read, and as I read I met with the following words: 'If thou wilt absolutely come to Mount

Zion in a triumphal chariot, or make thy entrance into the New Jerusalem upon a prancing horse, thou art likely never to come there. Leave, then, all thy lordly misconceptions behind; and humbly follow thy King, who makes His entry into the typical Jerusalem meek and lowly, riding upon an ass, yea, upon a colt, the foal of an ass.'

And as I was at this time sensible of my pride and self-will, I said in my heart, 'Oh this is the way! I want Him to come in His meek and lowly mind.' I immediately laid down the book, and went to prayer. I pleaded with God, and put Him in remembrance as He commanded me, in a manner I never did before. 'O Lord,' said I, 'Thy design in creating me was that I might glorify Thy name and enjoy Thee for ever! Let me therefore, I beseech Thee, answer the end of my being. Oh let me live to Thy glory! Thou seest, Lord, that I cannot glorify Thy name as I ought unless Thou makest an end of sin, and writest Thy law of love on my heart. Lord, hast Thou not promised to take away the heart of stone, and to give me a heart of flesh? Hast Thou not promised to pour clean water upon me, and to cleanse me from all my filthiness, and from all my dols? Hast Thou not promised to circumcise my heart, that I may love Thee with all my heart and soul? O Lord, was it not for this very end that Thy only Son was manifested in the flesh, even to destroy the works of the devil? to deliver me from all my inward enemies, that I may serve Thee without fear, in holiness and righteousness all my days? Therefore, O Lord,

make this the day of salvation! Now, now, O Lord, let the work be done! Amen.'

While I thus poured out my heart before Him, I seemed to enter into the holy of holies, by faith in the blood of the Lamb. My heart expanded to receive my holy Bridegroom, when He came, as it were, riding into my soul, in His chariot of love, with all His sanctifying grace. I could do nothing now but bless and magnify the name of the Lord for this wonderful manifestation. My only language was, 'Glory, glory, glory be to God!'

What tongue can tell, or heart conceive, the heaven that was opened in my heart at that moment! It might well be called 'joy unspeakable and full of glory!' After offering up my tribute of praise to Him who visited me in so extraordinary a manner, I went to bed full of love, of heaven, of God.

In the year 1780 my wife lay in, and about that time my business was so slack that I was several weeks out of work; by which means we were brought very low. In this extremity a kind friend asked me how much would set me up. I mentioned a certain sum, which he offered to lend me without bond or interest, until I was able to pay him; urging, at the same time, the necessity of my entering into business, as I had a growing family. Such a generous offer surprised me; but I could not consent to accept of it until I had consulted my wife. Accordingly, that night I spoke to her; but she did not seem forward to embrace it. However, thinking it

might be a call of Providence, I at length consented.

I then set about collecting the materials necessary for my business; and after a good deal of trouble completed my design. Having procured materials, the next thing was to look for work. To this end, I entered into the company of booksellers; printed large posting-bills and handbills in the most elegant manner, and had them posted about the city, sent to the booksellers, and dispersed in the coffee-houses; but all to little purpose; for in the course of about eight months I did not earn as much as would support myself; and had it not been for what little my wife earned, I believe we must have starved. For, not making a proper estimate when my friend spoke to me, I was obliged to enter deeper into the affair than I expected; which exposed me to temptation, when I saw myself, as it were, deprived of the means of discharging the debts I had contracted. At times, indeed, I could cast my whole care upon the Lord; but then the thought, 'How shall I get out of debt?' would again perplex me.

At last, seeing it was in vain to continue in that line, I came to a resolution to sell all, and pay everybody as far as it went. Accordingly, I did sell all; but most of what I had, greatly under the price I gave for them. I then discharged some debts I had contracted with those who either could not or would not bear with me; and with the remainder I made my friend an unworthy return for his kindness, as it fell short upwards of

twenty pounds of what he had lent me. However, he accepted of it, without troubling me for the rest. But notwithstanding he patiently bore with me, I was not satisfied. And therefore, that I might be the better able to pay the whole, I determined to go to London.

Accordingly, with a heavy heart, I sailed for Holyhead, in company with brother James Martin and brother Pilmoor. We travelled together to Chester, from whence they went to Leeds, and I to London. In this journey I endured much hardship; being obliged to ride almost from Holyhead to London on the coach-box.

In about three days after my arrival I got into work, where I continued for about a fortnight; but work being slack, my employer wanted to lower my wages. I believe I should have taken what he offered, only some men in the house had a guinea per week, and I thought it might hurt them if I did. On this, I made known my situation to Mr. Boardman, who advised me to return home as soon as possible. However, that I might be clear, I inquired at several printing-offices in London for work, but could not get any; then I determined to go to Ireland with Mr. Boardman. Only there seemed to be an objection; namely, my want of money. But that he removed by bearing my expenses. While I was in London, Mr. Wesley arrived from the Leeds Conference; but I had not courage to speak to him, all the time he stayed in town.

In my return to Dublin, I was near finishing my course. For, going through Wales, I was suddenly

pitched off the coach-box. But providentially having hold of the iron, I wheeled, and my foot rested upon the spring. I went off head foremost; and though the whole weight of my body was on my left arm, I was so supported by an invisible power that it seemed no weight at all. I have since almost shuddered at my dangerous situation, when sleeping on the top of the coach. Surely it was nothing less than the divine hand that prevented me from falling and waking in eternity.

When he came to Poolbeg, Mr. Boardman went on shore, and left the care of the luggage to me. But before he went he employed an open boat, instead of the wherry, which was near costing me my life, and him the loss of his goods. From thence we sailed peaceably enough till we got between he walls of the river Liffey, when a wherry in full sail darted through the river the contrary way, and when she got pretty near us, the man at the helm tacked about, and ran her head against the side of our little boat; where her bowsprit came across my back, and pressed me down with great violence, while our boat was near overset; but the Lord brought me through this also without receiving any hurt.

February 6, 1782, one of the members of the House of Commons for the city being dead, and two or three candidates offering themselves, my two fellow apprentices and I, being free of the city, were requested by our master to attend the corporation at the music-hall. We all accordingly met there with the three candidates, in the grove-room, so called from its being painted like a grove.

This was over the ball-room, and supposed to be twenty feet high or more. Alderman W—— arose and spoke first; then Mr. T—— H—— made a speech. Then the third candidate, Counsellor P——n, beginning with a feeble voice, the place was all silence, when, lo! in a moment, the beam broke close by the wall, and the floor sunk, and about three hundred persons went down in an instant. I had just time to perceive them sinking through the cloud of dust which ascended, before I fell myself; but, as God would have it, no one fell upon me. My fall was upon the pit of my stomach, which nearly knocked out my breath. For some time we were so encompassed with darkness that we could not rightly tell where we were; but the most horrid cries that could well be conceived were uttered by those whose limbs were broken. As we lay, not knowing which way to flee, some cried out, 'Lie still, and we shall be all safe.' I thought they perceived the roof giving way; and as I was on the top of the rest, I gave myself up for lost, expecting every moment to be dashed in pieces. I lay as close as I could, patiently waiting my doom; but finding the roof did not fall as I expected, I raised my head, looked about, and discovered an open window just at hand. I then arose; but Sir E—— N——, who was under me, cried out to me to take the boards off his legs, which he said were broken. This I did as well as I could, and lent him a hand to help him up. I then looked down, and saw my suffering fellow mortals like drowning men, stretching forth their arms, and

grasping at the first thing that presented itself. One of them catched me by the hand, and nearly pulled me down; but I disengaged myself, and made to the window, where I had to help a man through, who had his foot broken, and a desperate hole made in his forehead, so that the interior part of his skull might be seen. After him I went out myself, and, by the mercy of God, escaped without a broken bone, or the loss of a drop of blood.

When I got out I seemed like one returning from the dead, or coming from the field of battle. My face was covered with paleness, and it seemed as if I had bathed part of my garments in the blood of the slain. I went over to Mr. Dugdale's; but he not being come home, I thought he was buried in the ruins. So I went back to look for him, and turned over some of the rubbish; but could not find him. In the meantime he was carried home in a chair, with some of his ribs broken, and otherwise greatly hurt, so that his life hung in doubt for some time. While ranging about I espied my other fellow apprentice, not able to move, being greatly hurt in the thigh, and having one of his skirts torn off by something that catched him in the fall. Several others sat in the utmost agony with their legs and thighs broken, and otherwise shockingly mangled. Very few escaped unhurt more or less. Nine or ten, at least, died of the wounds and bruises they received; and others live disabled, to perpetuate the memory of this dreadful event. When I got home I was bled, and fainted away. My wife thought I was going

to expire; but I soon came to myself, and in a few days was enabled to go to my work as usual.

This same year it was impressed on my mind that I ought to give myself up to the blessed work of calling sinners to repentance. But then a damp came upon me, when I considered my unfaithfulness to His grace. Hence I was ready to conclude it could never be that such a vile creature should be chosen to labour in the vineyard of the Lord. But, blessed be His adorable name! I can say, 'Unto me who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ.' At first some objection was made to me, on account of my family. But about Christmas, 1782, I received a letter from Mr. Wesley, the substance of which was as follows:

'DEAR BROTHER,

'Not only Mr. Smith, but several others, gave a satisfactory account of you at the Conference. Mr. Watkinson writes me word that as Robert Blake has left him, he is in great want of help. I have no objections, if your wife is willing, for you to go upon trial to Limerick.

'JOHN WESLEY.'

Accordingly, I began immediately to prepare for my departure. My Dublin friends assisted me very much; and on Saturday, January 11, 1783, I took leave of my wife and child, my dear acquaintance, and native place, and with an aching heart set out.

I stopped at Naas to refresh myself and my horse: and, having a room to myself, with an aching heart I opened the Bible on these words, 'Go ye forth of Babylon; flee from the Chaldeans, with the voice of singing; declare ye, tell this, utter it even to the ends of the earth; saying, The Lord hath redeemed His servant Jacob' (Isa. xlviii. 20). I reached Munstereven that night; but being much fatigued, I lay down with a heart burdened with inexpressible grief. But the next morning I arose quite composed; and as it was the Sabbath day I rode to Portarlington, and preached twice.

On Monday I left Portarlington, and set off for my circuit. On the way I was much tried with the severity of the weather, and deeply exercised about my call to preach. But I found a willingness to endure hardships, if the Lord would be pleased to make me an instrument of good.

My great Preserver conducted me in safety through hail, rain, and wind, until I got to Cashel, the first place in my circuit. I entered the city in peace, and rode safely along, until I came to the street where I was to lodge. Then my horse suddenly fell. I was thrown over his neck upon my head, and dashed violently against the stones. Here I lay for a little time, stretched upon my back. When I arose I found no great hurt, though some who saw me fall wondered I was not killed. One of the drunkards of the town very civilly conducted me to my lodging; but the people of the house looked astonished at me, and did not seem well inclined to receive me; because, seeing

me so dirty and in such company, they thought I had been drinking; but my guide strongly assured them I had fallen from my horse, which helped to gain me a more friendly reception. I thought Satan was angry with me; but the God of my life overruled his malice.

During the short time I travelled this circuit, I had severe trials, within and without; but the Lord comforted me in all my tribulations. My wife was sick about five weeks, and was so forsaken by her acquaintances that she might have nearly adopted the words of the Psalmist: 'I am counted with them that go down to the pit, free among the dead.' The letters I received from her in this dark and cloudy day were like the tidings brought to Job, one weightier than another. Yet I was enabled to lay the matter before the Lord, and found unspeakable liberty. No outward trials whatever were sufficient to shake my confidence. I was strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might. O Thou God of love! Thou alone canst tell the happiness I enjoyed in Thee, while wading through the deep waters.

One morning in particular, while I was speaking from 'Blessed is the man that endureth temptation; for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life,' I was so filled with joy that it was as if I had got upon the wings of an eagle, and was soaring to endless day.

But that which distressed me most was my not having so many seals of my ministry as I expected. One day, while my mind was thus exercised, having the Bible in my hands, I opened upon

these words, 'Blow ye the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in My holy mountain' (Joel ii. 1). I replied immediately, 'Lord, put the trumpet to my mouth, and I will blow it.' That night I found a peculiar degree of liberty and courage in delivering my message to the people. However, nothing would satisfy me but hearing the people roar under the sermon, from a sense of their misery; and, on the other hand, shouting for joy, through a sense of pardoning love. And as I laboured with all my might, and endeavoured to walk close with God through the day, I expected that it would be the case; and because it was not (except in one or two instances), I was almost ready to conclude I was not sent of God.

But though I did not often perceive those marks which I laid down as proofs of my call to the ministry, yet I am now well assured I was doing the will of God, from the comfortable testimonies of the people at class-meetings and lovefeasts. And I think it would be well for every young preacher especially to meet the classes whenever he can. Nothing has a greater tendency to lift up the hands that hang down than to hear those who have sat under us relating the good they have received thereby. Another remark I would make is that we are not to look upon all our labours as lost because the seed we sow does not spring up immediately, or, at least, is not made known to us at the time. God makes this known only so far as it is necessary to enable us to go on in our work with humble boldness.

In April I attended the Conference; and from

thence[1] was sent to labour with Mr. R. Armstrong and Mr. J. Kerr, on the Ballyconnell Circuit. I may say we loved as brethren, and kept the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace. The party spirit which reigned throughout that circuit the year before was almost entirely removed. And some good was done to saints and sinners; we had therefore reason to bless God, who did not suffer us to labour in vain.

The second day I travelled in this circuit I was most dreadfully wet. It rained upon me for four hours, to such a degree that the covers of the books in my pockets were stripping off with the wet. When I got to my quarters, I thought I should have met with sympathizing friends; but they seemed not to think much about me. I suppose it was permitted for a trial of my patience, as I found this family exceedingly friendly ever after. I dried myself as well as I could, and got some cold milk to refresh me after my toil. But I went to bed, slept most comfortably, and rose next morning without the least cold. After breakfast I rode to my destined place: when I went in, I could not see the face of a Methodist; which discouraged me much. After dinner, the day was very gloomy; which helped to depress my spirits more. I entered into a train of reasoning, till I came to a resolution to quit the work, and return home. Accordingly, I sent immediately to the field for my horse, clapped on my saddle-bags, mounted him, and rode off, determined never to travel more.

[1] i.e. the Conference of 1783, at Dublin.

But I had a conviction I was doing wrong; and feared, as I was flying from the work, I should fall and break my neck. But so odious was the cross that I had neither inclination nor power to resist. When I had got about five miles, I met a member of the society I was flying from. The woman, though she never saw me before, without asking whether I was a preacher or not, stopped me, and said, 'What is the reason you are turning your back on E——?' I looked earnestly at her, and said, 'How do you know me?' On which she pointed to a young man, who told her I was the person he directed to C——n the night before. She then said, as if she knew my heart, 'I suppose you do not mean to travel this circuit any more?' I said, 'I do not mean to travel at all any more: I cannot stand it; and therefore I am going home.' Then I rode away from her; but my heart was ready to break with grief.

As I pursued my journey, I rode into Enniskillen to get a bait for my horse; but, it being fair-day, and the town greatly crowded, I, being a stranger, did not know where to apply for it. While I was looking about, a stranger, one of the society of Tonyloman, came up to me, and said, 'Sir, do you want anything?' I said, 'I want a feed of oats for my horse.' By-and-by another came up to me, and smiled; but I knew him not; however, I soon found he was a Methodist. This simple circumstance, I believe, was the appointment of Providence, as it helped to prevent my going home as I intended. After getting the oats, I rode on to Mr. H. D.'s, the general steward,

thinking to spend that night and the Sabbath day there, and on Monday to set off for Dublin. Mr. D. reasoned the case very much with me, to keep me on the circuit; but I could not then be brought fully to consent. However, the young men of Tonyloman persuaded me to go thither, where I preached twice that evening. At last I was prevailed on to stay until Dr. C[oke] came into the circuit.

During this interval I had many deep exercises of mind. I could hardly look upon myself to be a preacher, and I thought it absolutely impossible that I should submit to travel. I was altogether unwilling to continue, and would have been glad of any pretence to return home: I almost wished for a rupture, or a broken leg, or anything that might appear a lawful excuse for it; for I was afraid to go home without one. While I was thus exercised, I received a letter from my wife, encouraging me to persevere in the work of God; part of which was as follows:

DUBLIN, *May* 14, 1783.

'MY DEAR,

'The receiving of your letter gave me joy; but on reading it my heart did truly feel for you. Yet, on consideration, I think it is a good sign that the devil does so much strive to hinder you. He fears you will lay your shoulders to the Lord's work, and his power will be shaken; and on this account you may expect all the opposition that the prince of darkness can make.

'Are you afraid of the devil, who is himself held

in chains by your Master? Is not God on your side? Then fear not. This temptation is for the trial of your faith. The Lord will make your cup to overflow after it, and bless you in His own way.

'I remain, your affectionate wife,

'ALICE JOYCE.'

I now wrote a letter for Dr. C[oke], acquainting him with my objections against travelling. When I came to Killeshandra, I gave him the letter. He took much pains to remove my objections. At last I submitted for that time; but soon after the temptation returned with greater violence.

Accordingly, I wrote to the doctor a second time, requesting permission to quit travelling; when, getting another letter which encouraged me to go on, I found a willingness to sacrifice my all for the sake of the gospel. My mind being once more set at liberty, I preached the next morning with remarkable power; and I believe not many of the congregation went away unblessed. From that hour, through mercy, I was enabled to devote myself fully to the work of God, and to endure hardness with cheerfulness. And though I had lived twenty-eight years and upwards in Dublin, I never, during my stay in the north, murmured at the hardest labour, or the coarsest food I met with.

My wife also endured some hardship upon this circuit; yet she could not wish the cross removed. But what she wanted in temporals the Lord made up in spirituals. It was on this circuit He graciously restored her to the light of His

countenance, filling her with peace and joy in believing. Here also the Lord favoured her with the affection of the people; several of whom were grieved at her departure.

Upon the whole, I have reason to be thankful for my appointment to the north; and trust I shall never lose my affection for my dear friends in those parts, or the grateful remembrance which I retain for the many little tokens of love they showed me for Christ's sake.

In July, 1784, I was appointed assistant in the Athlone Circuit; an office I saw myself very unfit for. But I cast my care upon the Lord, and obtained help of Him, so as to get through with satisfaction to some and profit to myself.

This year the Lord was pleased to give me favour in the sight of the people, and to bless me with success in my labours. He enlarged the borders of Zion, and made me willing to spend and be spent for Him.

In January, 1785, I went to Dublin, intending to stay about two nights; but I was seized with sickness, which detained me longer than I intended. I believe this was the appointment of an all-gracious Providence, as I experienced such a measure of divine love as was beyond what I could ask or think.

After being in my circuit a considerable time, the letters I received from Dublin respecting the work were so delightful that I was desirous of seeing my native place once more. On my arrival I found many much alive to God; by means of those men of God, J[ames] R[ogers] and A[ndrew]

B[lair], and that mother in Israel, sister R[ogers]. I soon catched a measure of their spirit, and was stirred up to seek for purity of heart; and was not without hope of getting a draught of that water of life before I left Dublin.

The 9th of January, I was deeply wounded in my spirit, on account of indwelling sin. I saw it was like a flood ready to overwhelm me. I groaned to be delivered; and abhorred myself on account of it. That night I went and sat with S. R. and S. B., and we talked about Christian perfection till Mr. R. came into the room; it being late, he said to me, 'You must pray for us.' Being distressed, I said, 'I want some one to pray for me.' We kneeled down, and S. R. wrestled with God in my behalf. Yet I went home much oppressed, which was visible to all. One asked me if anything was the matter. I was unwilling to tell; but on their pressing me, I told them my carnal mind was the cause. After family prayer, I entered my chamber, and stood awhile leaning against the wall. The language of my heart was, 'Lord, I am nothing! Lord, I am nothing!' After which I went to prayer, and, in a moment, found power to obey that command, 'My son, give Me thy heart.'

I then arose from my knees, and went to bed in peace, praising the Lord for all His goodness. Notwithstanding this change, I was afraid to speak in a positive manner what the Lord had done for me. I walked in the light, with my heart full of love to God. After my departure from thence I wrote to S. R. as follows:

'ATHLONE, *January* 31, 1785.

'First: In my former state, though often deeply distressed on account of my depravity, yet I could not freely part with all; so that when I prayed against this or that evil, which beset me most, it was with fear, and a secret unwillingness to part with that I prayed against. In my present state I do not pray that I may give up this or that evil; for I have cheerfully given up all. Yet I feel a necessity of constantly looking unto Jesus, that I may not be ensnared again.

'Secondly: In my former state unprofitable thoughts sometimes carried me away. But now, I feel both inclination and power to reject them immediately.

'Thirdly: Though I frequently was enabled to delight myself in the Lord, yet there were certain times that I seemed to be forgetful of Him, so far as to lose the happiness arising from communion with Him. But now I feel that promise made good, "He will keep them in perfect peace, whose minds are stayed on Him."

'Fourthly: In my former state I loved Christian conversation; yet I was often ensnared by trifling conversation. But now Christian conversation is my constant aim, unless so far as I am obliged to speak about other necessary things.

'Fifthly: In my former state, though I was sensible of my unworthiness, yet I had not so clear a discovery of my shortcomings in every particular, and of course could not see the

necessity of keeping close to the fountain of my Redeemer's blood.

'Lastly: In my former state I was often harassed with doubts and fears whether I should be admitted to behold the face of God in glory. In my present, I feel no doubt at any time of my being for ever with Him.

'This is the change my God has wrought in me, of which I am as sensible as that I exist. Yet, I find, I am in an enemy's country, and feel myself attacked by various temptations: but by looking to the Captain of my salvation, I am "more than conqueror."'

I cannot but admire the great goodness of God in thus manifesting Himself to me at this very time; as I had a variety of trials to encounter, which must have made my hands hang down had He not prepared me for them by a double portion of His grace. By this I was enabled to add to my faith courage; no hardship could make me afraid. I counted not my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy. When riding in the midst of my pain, which was often beyond expression, I have been constrained to cry, 'Oh the honour of being an ambassador for Christ!' So many precious smiles of His face have rested upon me while travelling round my circuit that every cross was light, every rough way smooth, and every crooked place straight.

O Lord, grant that I may not be found among the slumbering watchmen, or lazy, careless shepherds, when Thou shalt appear to reward Thy

faithful labourers; and to require, at the slumbering watchman's hand, the blood of those who have perished through their unfaithfulness!

MATTHIAS JOYCE.

ATHLONE, *October* 14, 1785.

His obituary is in the *Minutes* for 1814:

MATTHIAS JOYCE, a brother whose memory is precious to all who knew him. He was early in life converted from the errors of Popery. A full and pleasing account is given in the *Methodist Magazine* of 1786 of the progress of the work of grace in his soul till his call to the ministry, and of his travels and labours in various parts of Ireland. He was a man of a remarkably loving and peaceful disposition; a wise, acceptable, and successful preacher; much tried in his family by various afflictions, which no doubt preyed on his spirits, and helped to bring on that debility, both of body and mind, which disqualified him for preaching during the last three years of his life. He was engaged in the ministry thirty years, and died, as he had lived, an Israelite indeed, in whom was no guile.

BENJAMIN RHODES

LETTER TO THE REV. JOHN WESLEY.[1]

April 20, 1779.

REV. SIR,

I WAS born at Kexborough, a little town in the West Riding of Yorkshire, in the year 1743. My father, who taught a school in the town, had the external parts of religion before he heard the Methodists: he used family and private prayer, read the Scriptures and other books of devotion in his family daily, and frequently instructed, exhorted, and catechized his children. By this discipline we were restrained from many evils, taught the fear of the Lord, and, in some measure, to seek that which is good.

Before I was eleven years of age, I went with my father to Birstall to hear Mr. Whitefield. I found my soul deeply affected under the word. At first I had a kind of terror; but before the sermon was ended, my heart was melted into tenderness, and sweetly drawn after God; yet a few months after this a propensity to foolish pleasures sprung up in my breast, and drew me into childish vanities.

At about twelve years of age I took a walk one evening into a large, thick wood, not far from the town. I left the path, and wandered in the

[1] *Arminian Magazine*, 1779, p. 358.

thickest part of it, till I was entirely lost. Night began to close in upon me, and I did not know which way to turn my face towards home. It soon became quite dark: I then gave over rambling, and intended to remain there till the next morning, when I hoped to find my way out. In this situation I found my former impressions begin to return with much sweetness. My soul was drawn out in prayer; I was deeply sensible of the presence of God; my heart overflowed with penitential tenderness; and, under a deep sense of my own unworthiness, and of His goodness mercy, and love, I sang and prayed with much fervour: yea, I was so thankful that the Lord had found me, while lost in a wood, that I would not for all the world have missed such an opportunity.

My parents, being alarmed at my not returning at the usual time, made great search for me. At last, my father came to the wood-side, and called aloud: I soon heard him, and following the sound, got out about midnight, without receiving any hurt.

The impressions I received this night lasted for some time; but youthful pleasures again prevailed, and drew me into such follies as grieved the Spirit of God, and greatly damped the fervour of my own spirit.

I was chiefly at home with my father till I was sixteen years of age, and mostly attended the school. I had great opportunities of improvement both in learning and religion; but my volatile spirit did not love study and confinement. The love of pleasure prevailed over my judgement;

and, though my vain enjoyments were rendered very painful from my father's displeasure, and the terrors of my conscience, yet my attachments to them made me careless about things profitable, and prevented such an improvement as might have been made.

About this time my father put me out to learn some branches in the wool and the worsted business. His chief motive in placing me where he did was that I might be under the means of grace; and though I attended the preaching constantly, heartily believed the doctrine, and often felt the power of the word, yet I was so much taken up with pleasure, and those companions who led me from seriousness and religion, that at last, as with a flood, I was carried away; not indeed into gross sins (for I do not remember that I ever swore one oath, or took God's name into my mouth upon a light occasion), but into foolish company, gaiety, and youthful vanities. But in my foolish career I was like the troubled sea: the more I sought to please myself in vanity, the further I was from it; and sometimes my conscience terrified me almost to distraction, so that I have been afraid to sleep lest I should awake in endless misery. All this time my understanding was clearly informed respecting the nature and the necessity of religion; and I felt great reverence for it. None can tell the struggles I had in my breast, between my conscience and my inclinations: sometimes one and sometimes the other was obeyed. I knew I could not be truly religious without parting with all

that is contrary to seriousness, and without having the bent of my mind turned from vanity to God. Neither did I make any pretensions to it, as I had not a fixed determination to forsake all, and follow Christ.

When I was about nineteen, I thought myself most miserable. I was quite sick of vanity, and so burdened with a sense of it on my conscience, that I could not find rest day or night. I then began to think on the mercy and goodness of God, which had been so abundantly made manifest to me in times past; but my follies so reproached me that I was ashamed to look up. I then found a willingness to be saved in God's way; and, groaning in my bondage, prayed, 'Turn Thou me, O Lord, and I shall be turned.' The Lord heard, and turned the whole desire of my heart from everything earthly unto Himself: it was then I found such relentings of soul as I had not done before. Nothing affected me more than a sense of God's long-suffering, mercy, and goodness; that, after I had so often refused His calls, quenched His Spirit, and abused His blessings, yet I no sooner cried to Him than He heard, and delivered me from the servitude of sin, and encouraged me to hope in His mercy. My whole heart was then given up to Him. Prayer was now my chief business; and I often sang very feelingly:

> Wealth and honour I disdain,
> Earthly comforts all are vain;
> These can never satisfy;
> Give me Christ, or else I die.

In this state I continued several months, desiring and seeking God alone, without much interruption or temptation. About this time I was invited to a private meeting among the Calvinists. The minister spoke much of the power of imagination and what a deluded people the Methodists were, and warned his flock not to come near them. I was greatly bewildered and terrified at this. I began to suspect that my call to religion, and the change in my mind, were only delusion. I was also tempted to think that all who professed religion were like myself. I was carried so far as to doubt of Christianity, and of the being of a God! I thought the greatest part of the world consisted of heathens, Mahometans, and Jews; the Popish religion is almost as idolatrous as the Pagan; there are but few Protestant Christians, and but very few of these who act consistently with the doctrines of Christianity. These thoughts increased my infidelity till I was almost distracted. Darkness and horror sat brooding upon my mind, together with a gloomy fear of falling into nothing, or worse than nothing, at death. I hated life, and, though tempted, was yet afraid to venture on death. I had no power to pray: I only wished for a dark retreat, where I might converse with darkness and misery alone.

In this 'horrible pit' I groaned for deliverance, yet was not sensible of a Deliverer near. At last I found power to look up; my heart began to melt, and the spirit of prayer returned. I cried, and the Lord heard. The darkness began to disperse;

hope again visited my soul; yea, it increased, attended with a degree of confidence in God, till the 'Sun of righteousness arose with healing in His wings.' I beheld the 'Lamb of God who taketh away the sins of the world'; and had such a sense of the sufficiency of His atonement as I had not had before, with a conviction that I was interested therein. All my fears and doubts disappeared; I found the peace of God; His love was manifested to me, which caused me to love Him again. Joy and gratitude now so possessed my heart that my cup was ready to run over; and my soul, being freed from all its bondage, said, 'God is become my salvation.' Now my infidel fears were gone, and the truth of Christianity appeared to me in the clearest light. Not only my understanding saw, but all my powers felt, the truth thereof. I had a deep sense of a present God, whom I approached in the name of Jesus, with reverential awe, confidence, gratitude, and love, and could call Him 'my God and my all.'

In this happy season, my joy frequently prevented my sleep, while my soul was taken up with Him who is altogether lovely, and in ecstasies of joy in the stillness of the night I often sang my great Deliverer's praise. All things earthly appeared so empty that I thought nothing here below worth a thought, only as it tended to promote my eternal interests. I only desired grace and glory. I then began to conclude that my adversaries were quite overthrown; and that I had only to march forward, and take possession

of the 'land of promise.' I therefore pressed forward rejoicing for some months. At length, through unwatchfulness, and giving way to levity, my comforts greatly diminished, till, imperceptibly, I was again drawn into a wilderness state; and though I was diligent in the outward means of grace, yet I had lost the pleasing sensations which I formerly had found therein.

About this time I was strongly beset with some Calvinists, who used all the arguments in their power to draw me into the belief of their doctrines. I was almost persuaded to believe 'final perseverance,' only I did not see how I could separate it from 'reprobation'; I wished to do it, but could not. I thought, if these must necessarily be saved on whom God begins a good work, then the rest must as necessarily be damned on whom He does not begin it. When I considered 'final perseverance' as it related to myself only, it appeared so pleasant that I hardly could resist it: but when I considered it as a branch of the doctrines of unconditional 'election and reprobation,' it gave me pain, and inclined me to renounce it. Reprobation appeared to me quite contrary to the whole purport of Scripture—the nature of a holy, just, and merciful God—the state of man as an accountable creature—and to a future judgement, where rewards and punishments will be dispensed to every man according to his works. However, my lot being cast among those who held the decrees, I frequently heard the chief arguments that are used in support thereof. Sometimes their arguments appeared so plausible

that I began to stagger in my mind, and to be much distressed. I then made it the subject of prayer; and one night, after I had been wrestling with God, that He would lead me into all truth, I dreamed of reading a passage of Scripture which gave me entire satisfaction. I could not remember the passage in the morning; but on opening my Bible, the first words I cast my eyes upon were, 'The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness; but is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance' (2 Pet. iii. 9). Such light and conviction attended the words as removed every doubt of God's loving all mankind; and from that day to this my mind has been established in the comfortable doctrines of universal redemption.

But though I was fixed as to doctrines, yet I did not find, as formerly, such a sweet intercourse with heaven; and foolish desires began to arise again, which formerly seemed to be dead. I had also very powerful temptations; and earthly attachments prevailed too far upon my affections. Yet the hand of the Lord was over me for good, and preserved me from the dangers to which I was exposed.

When I was about the age of twenty-one, I heard Mr. Jaco preach on Heb. xii. 1. He insisted on the necessity of laying aside every weight, and the sin which so easily besets us, in order to our running the Christian race. I saw the necessity of it, and was again stirred up; and the Lord once more set me at liberty from

every entanglement. In a short time my former comforts returned with more solidity, and my understanding was abundantly matured in the knowledge of the Christian warfare.

About this time I was desired to lead several classes. I found those meetings were both solemn and profitable to myself and others. The first quarter several found a sense of forgiveness, and others were greatly stirred up. I was also desired to speak a word of exhortation; this also I complied with. I now soon found work enough, as many came to hear what I had got to say. Indeed, I have often stood up to speak to a large congregation when I would rather have undergone almost any punishment. However, the Lord gave me strength according to my day; for when I have begun to speak, my fear and trembling were quite taken away, and I frequently found much freedom in speaking. And I have reason to believe that the Lord rendered my weak labours useful; for some were turned from their wickedness to God, some converted, and many stirred up to press forward. On a Sunday I usually preached at several neighbouring towns, and sometimes visited them on the week-days.

As the Conference drew near, Mr. Jaco asked me if I was willing to travel, suppose there should be a want of preachers. I found much reluctancy to this, arising from a sense of my insufficiency; and I had such a love to the people where I was that the thought of leaving them gave me great pain; yet I desired not to be governed by my own inclination, but by the providence of God.

At the Conference held at Leeds, 1766, I was desired to take a circuit; to which I consented. I set out in the twenty-third year of my age, and went into the Norwich Circuit, where I stayed two years. The Lord was pleased to own my poor labours here in the conviction and conversion of several souls.

At the Conference in London, 1767, I was taken into full connexion. My second circuit was in Oxfordshire, where I stayed two years. In that time the work of the Lord was enlarged abundantly.

My next remove was to Canterbury, where I stayed one year. While I was here, my father died. Since then I have been much in the north, to be near my mother and sisters.

My next remove was into Lincolnshire, where I stayed two years among a poor people, who received the word gladly. We got into some new places, and in other respects God gave me some fruit of my labours.[1] From hence I went to Hull and Scarborough, where I stayed three years. Here we raised several new societies, and in several parts of the circuit the work prospered.

I next went to Newcastle-upon-Tyne, where I stayed only one year. Here I had many profitable opportunities, and had also the pleasure of seeing some fruit of my labours. From hence I went to Alnwick and Dunbar, where I laboured

[1] A notice of William Fowler, of Winterton, in the *Methodist Magazine*, 1834, p. 312, says: 'The first Methodist preacher he could remember hearing was Mr. Benjamin Rhodes, under whose preaching his "mind was divinely impressed." This was in 1771.'

one year. I had much riding here; but being amongst a people whom I loved, and with whom I laboured comfortably, I thought little of fatigues.

I am now in Sussex and Kent. Since I came into these parts, I have lost a sister and mother, who, I believe, are both gone after my father into Abraham's bosom; but I am left behind, almost the only person out of a large family. But how long or how short my day may be I leave to unerring wisdom; one only concern ought to possess me, to employ it as I ought; then, at the close of it, I also shall sleep in peace, and after a short absence, be with my dear departed friends.

Thrice happy meeting!
Nor time nor death, shall ever part us more.

I am thankful to God that He ever called me to this blessed work; as by this means I have gained more strength to my own soul, have been of some use to my fellow creatures, have had an opportunity of knowing a little of the world, and of the state of religion amongst the Methodists and others; all which I judge to be more than a reward for what I have done and suffered.

At present there is nothing so precious to me as religion and the cause of God; and my principal desire is to fill up my little sphere, that when I am called to give an account, I may do it with joy, and not with sorrow.

I am, rev. sir,
Your affectionate son in the gospel,
BENJAMIN RHODES.

[Wesley writes to Joseph Benson (then at Newcastle), November 7, 1776 (*Works*, xii. 424), 'I desire Brother Rhodes will give no tickets, either to those who have not constantly met their classes, or to any who do not solemnly promise to deal in stolen goods no more. He and you together may put a stop to this crying sin.' In a letter to Rhodes, then stationed at Redruth, January 7, 1789, 'You have done exactly right,' and adds, 'I think you can be mild, and yet firm.'

He died at Margate in 1815. His well-known hymn, 'My heart and voice I raise,' is the first part of his poem, *Messiah*, published in 1787. He wrote several hymns. (See *Methodist Hymn-Book Illustrated*, p. 109).]

His obituary is in the *Minutes* for 1816:

This venerable and excellent man was brought to the knowledge of God and His truth at an early period of life. When he was yet a child, the Father of lights revealed His Son in the heart of His servant, and made him happy in His love.

Having received a divine call to the work of the ministry, he willingly devoted all his talents to the duties of his holy calling; and it pleased the great Head of the Church not only to qualify him for these duties, but to bless him with many seals to his ministry.

For about half a century he was engaged in calling sinners to repentance; during which time he always possessed the confidence of his brethren, and was highly respected as a faithful and

laborious servant of the Lord. During the last years of his life he resided with his family at Margate; where he was always found ready for any part of his Master's work of which he was capable.

Mr. Rhodes was a man of great simplicity and integrity of mind; he was warmly and invariably attached to the whole economy of Methodism. His life was a practical explication of his faith; and his character, both in the church and the world, was creditable to himself and honourable to religion.

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